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Private prayer in Christian  
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PRIVATE PRAYER IN CHRISTIAN  
STORY



# PRIVATE PRAYER IN CHRISTIAN STORY

BY  
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AUTHOR OF "THE CHRISTIAN YEAR IN HUMAN STORY," "THE OLD  
TESTAMENT IN LIFE AND LITERATURE," "THE NEW  
TESTAMENT IN LIFE AND LITERATURE," ETC.



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TO  
MY MINISTER  
DR. R. C. GILLIE





## PREFACE

EIGHT years ago, when a very favourable reception had been given by reviewers and by the public to my book entitled "The Christian Year in Human Story," Sir William Robertson Nicoll expressed a wish that I should carry on my studies and prepare a volume dealing in some way with the literature of Prayer. Friedrich Heiler's great work "Das Gebet" had been published in 1918, amid the closing agonies of the war, and I do not think Sir William ever saw it. Though the fifth edition (1923) has been constantly in my hands of late years, I may fairly claim that this book is not in any way an imitation or an abbreviation of Heiler. With the exception of a few sentences translated here and there with due acknowledgment, I have copied nothing from him. His monumental work, like the Bible itself, might be called a library rather than a book. The author deals at length, for instance, with the characteristics of prayer among primitive races, prayer in the religion of the Hellenic peoples, public worship, liturgies, and many other branches of an inexhaustible theme. I acknowledge with sincere gratitude help derived from his section on "Prayer in Mysticism."

The chapters which follow deal exclusively

with Private Prayer as it unfolds itself from century to century through the course of Christian story. I have tried, within the limits of a short historical narrative, to show the workings of this power—secret, holy, and incalculable—in the experience of individuals. In choosing the names of eminent Christians from the dawn of our era to the present day, I have been guided, naturally, by my personal preferences and intimate reading. I trust I have succeeded in showing how far-reaching has been the efficacy of private prayer, from age to age, in ordinary business affairs. The contemplative life is for the few; the mystics themselves were often engaged in practical and exhausting toil. Divine promises as to the hearing and answering of prayer were given to struggling men and women whose physical energies were worn out with each day's labour. Though slavery is gone, and economic conditions have changed in some respects for the better, we know at least that the future belongs to the workers. If *their* voices ceased to rise in prayer, the world would sink back into materialism. What could the Doctors of the Church have done unsupported by the devout laity who prepared their way? The late Principal Lindsay has told of the influential prayer-groups which in Renaissance Germany united princes and burghers, so that Luther's message fell on tender, awakened hearts. In every age of revival the same mighty, unseen influences are at work.

In sending these pages to press, I recall with affection and gratitude the never-failing en-

couragement I received from the late Sir Ernest Hodder-Williams in connection with my earlier books. There is not one of them that does not bear, on the first copy sent to me, his own autograph with very kind words. I thank his brother, Mr. R. Percy Hodder-Williams, for his personal interest in this new volume.

I have dedicated it, by permission, to my friend and minister, the Rev. R. C. Gillie, D.C.L., who has, on various occasions, quoted in his sermons from two of my other books, "The ' Old ' and The ' New ' Testament in Life and Literature."

My heartiest thanks are due to the Rev. T. H. Darlow, formerly Literary Superintendent of the Bible Society, who has most kindly read the proofs. I thank my friend Miss Edith Gegg for help in preparing the book for the press.

J. T. S.





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Pray without ceasing, without wavering, faithfully, instantly, fervently. Prayer is the source of all our strength.

The Encyclical Letter of the Lambeth Conference, 1920.

For morning and evening prayer all men can and should *make* leisure.

J. H. NEWMAN.

Let your morning and evening thoughts be points of rest for your mind's eye, and let those thoughts be upon the narrow way, and the blessedness of heaven, and the glory and power of Christ your Saviour.

J. H. NEWMAN.

Who knows upon what worlds, what systems, Christian prayer and effort even now tells ?

DORA GREENWELL.

Have your times of prayer whether you are in the humour for it or not. You are learning to speak with God.

FATHER MATURIN.

We must know that in the order of divine things, we always do more than we think we are doing.

HENRI PERREYVE.

I see that these beloved horizons, so vast and so full of light, may unroll themselves, may be spread out, in the smallest cell ; all we need is a little silence and a single word spoken by God.

HENRI PERREYVE.

He was never at ease in Sion, and shunned the professions of facile piety. But he did not lose his childlike trust in God, and drew strong and abiding comfort from a creed which was as forthright and unquestioning as a mediæval crusader's. He and Rivy (his brother) during their brief campaign together read the 121st Psalm every morning. Francis never went into a match, much less a battle, without prayer.

JOHN BUCHAN on Francis Grenfell, V.C.

## INTRODUCTION

### I

#### OLD TESTAMENT PREPARATION

“However far we travel backward in historic ages, we can discern the worshipper, the altar and the uplifted hands of prayer.”

W. P. PATERSON, “The Nature of Religion.”

OUR purpose is to show the energy of private prayer working throughout the Christian centuries as a spiritual force, secret and incalculable, amid the material forces of this world. In the ancient Hebrew faith, out of whose bosom Christianity arose, communion with the Holy One was man's highest right and dearest privilege. Of every great leader it might have been said in turn, “As a prince hast thou power with God and with men and hast prevailed.” Long before the Tabernacle existed, Abraham drew near and stood before the Lord. He is honoured as a prince to this day by the whole Eastern world. Islamic peoples call him Challilu-Allahi, the beloved of God, and they have captured something of his prayerful habit. Sir Martin Conway, describing his travels in the East in former years, says one did not have to go to the mosque to see the people pray. “They prayed everywhere at the orthodox hours without hesitation or shame. Beautiful it was to see them, especially towards



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sunset—some draped figure outlined in dark silhouette against a glowing sky, standing, kneeling, touching the ground with his head, silently reciting the appointed litany.”<sup>1</sup>

A younger traveller, Captain Angus Buchanan, wrote in describing his passage across the Sahara desert, “At dusk, after the sun had set, we halted the caravan for a few minutes, as is always our custom, so that the natives, who are all Moham-medans, might pray. It is an impressive sight to see these devotions delivered at the wayside by pious men, who never forget to pray each morning and evening under any circumstances—a small band, in a great lone land, thinking of their God; the dark line of loaded camels silhouetted on the sand as against a white sheet, devout men to one side a little facing East, bending and kneeling as they gesticulate and mutter prayer.”

Abraham's name is bound up with the pilgrimage to Mecca, and there is even a legend that the Black Stone outside the Kaabah, which the pilgrims kiss devoutly, was given to him by the angel Gabriel. His title, “the Friend of God,” is enshrined in history and prophecy, and is quoted in the Epistle of St. James. His nearness to God is never more apparent than when he intercedes for Sodom. Meyer notes these features of his prayer: (1) It was lonely prayer. He waited till on all the wide plateau there was no living man to overhear. (2) It was prolonged prayer. “We do not give the sun a chance to thaw us.” (3) It was very humble prayer, and

<sup>1</sup> “Palestine and Morocco” (1923), p. 25.

(4) it was believing prayer. "In point of fact, God was drawing him on."

Four times Abraham prostrates himself in spirit before the Eternal. His words, "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes," are still among the Christian's opening words for intercessory petition.

Abraham's steward, Eliezer of Damascus, has left an example of the use of private prayer in business. When he arrives at the town of Nahor to fulfil his master's commission by bringing home a wife for Isaac, he makes his camels "kneel beside the well of water at the evening hour, when women come out to draw water." "'O Eternal,' he said, 'God of my master, Abraham, . . . here I stand, beside the fountain! The daughters of the citizens are coming out to draw water. Now may the maiden to whom I say, 'Pray, lower your pitcher, that I may drink,' the maiden who answers, 'Drink, and let me give a drink to your camels also'—may she be the maiden Thou hast allotted to Thy servant Isaac! So shall I know that Thou hast been kind to my master.'"<sup>1</sup>

The prayer of the faithful steward was answered, so that he said, when departing with Rebekah, "The Eternal has made my errand a success."

"Looking back on my diary," said C. H. Spurgeon, in the sermon "Concerning Prayer," "I find it studded with answers to prayer. Often when I have talked with friends of an evening, telling them a few cases in which God

<sup>1</sup> Genesis xxiv. 12-14 (Dr. Moffatt's Translation).

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has heard my cries in time of need, they have said, 'Have you written that down?' 'Well no, I cannot say that I have.' 'Oh!' says one, 'pray do not let such facts be lost.' I have to reply that many cases of answered prayer are quite beyond the belief of average people. I know them to be true, but I do not expect others to believe my tale. I solemnly declare that no fact is better proved by my experience than that the Lord hears the prayers of His believing people."

Jacob at Bethel and Peniel is the type of those who in this world are thrown entirely on their own resources. "It was his calling to be in the storm," says J. H. Newman; "it was his very life to be a pilgrimage; it was the very thread of the days of his years to be few and evil." His voice crying from the wilderness confirms the Psalmist's saying:

"O Thou who hearest prayer,  
all men shall come to Thee.  
Though our sins be too much for us,  
'tis Thine to cancel our transgressions." <sup>1</sup>

The wandering Bedouin, as Doughty tells us, begins his day with prayer. He asks that its hours may be fortunate. "Grant Thou that we see not the evil."

Captain F. Kingdon Ward, in "The Mystery Rivers of Tibet," <sup>2</sup> says, describing a remote alpine region: "At night when white mists roll up the valley, wrapping the mountains in ghostly garments, the herdsmen fall to prayer. Their voices rise and fall in monotonous droning chorus,

<sup>1</sup> Psalm lxxv. 3 (Dr. Moffatt's Translation).    <sup>2</sup> P. 118 (1923).

as they chant the oft-repeated words never omitted because they live thus hermit-like away from their village; and presently the muffled notes from iron-throated yak-bells ring solemnly through the darkness."

A writer on Bolivia reports that in the high Andes and in the remoter Indian villages two years may pass without a visit from a priest. The natives are Christians and their churches are kept open for private prayer. In a village at the foot of the mighty snow-peak of Sorata this writer found that the little church was always full of wild flowers, newly gathered and placed about the steps and the altar. "I noticed," he adds, "that no traveller ever passed the church without entering to say a prayer." In the mysterious Indian capital of Paroma, which few white men have visited, he found the church open.<sup>1</sup>

Jacob had known what it was to pray amid scenes of utter desolation and again with crushing responsibilities weighing on his mind. In his later years, as Newman says, "his distinguishing grace was a habit of affectionate musing upon God's providences towards him in times past, and of overflowing thankfulness for them." He blessed the sons of Joseph, "bending in prayer over the head of his staff." His cry of confession comes down to us: "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which Thou hast showed unto Thy servant." Thomas à Kempis expresses the same thought: "Thou hast showed unto Thy servant mercy beyond all expectation, favour and loving-kindness beyond

<sup>1</sup> "Adventures in Bolivia" (1922), by C. H. Prodgers.



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all desert.” And from the aged Jacob we hear at last that Simeon-like longing, “I have waited for Thy salvation, O Lord.”

The prayers of Moses, the leader of Israel, were both daring and humble. When he mourned over Israel’s idolatry, he cried in broken words to the Lord : “Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin—and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written.” A little farther on we read that “the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.” Like Enoch, he had this testimony that he pleased God. He entered into those mysteries of which Coleridge had a glimpse when he spoke of prayer as “the most arduous act of the reason and the will.” It was Moses who asked to see the glory or full majesty of the Lord. Dr. John Duncan may have been thinking of that passage,<sup>1</sup> when he wrote these words in his “*Colloquia Peripatetica*” on the phrase in the *Te Deum* “The King of Glory” : “There are some meditative minds that can seize hold of this phrase, and of the truth that is in it, and let it drift through their inmost being, or rather allow their inmost being to drift through it, in silent awe

<sup>1</sup> Exodus xxxiv. 19–23. “In Israel,” says Heiler, “it was the great prophet-like act of Moses, that he made personal association with Jahve in prayer independent of the ritual of sacrifice. It is true that in the Hebrew worship of later ages sacrifice occupies a large place, but the praying of the great prophets, like that of the Psalmists, was an intercourse with God which had no connection with sacrifice. The freedom of the Christian’s prayer-life from all sacrificial offerings is a heritage from the prophets of Israel.” (“*Das Gebet*,” p. 221.)

and gladness. When our intuitions work freely, where reverence and love unite with a wondering insight, there is always peace; and sometimes there are gleams (outbursts) of inexpressible joy."

"When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, his face was in a glow!"<sup>1</sup> "Make conscience of beginning the day with God," wrote Bunyan. "For he that begins it not with Him will hardly end it with Him. It is he that finds God in his closet that will carry the savour of Him into his house, his shop, and his more open conversation. When Moses had been with God in the mount, his face shone, he brought of that glory into the camp."

David's "Psalm of Deliverance" is twice repeated.<sup>2</sup> Its most familiar words, "Thy gentleness hath made me great," are translated by Dr. Moffatt, "Thine answers to prayer have raised me up." Words have come to us also from the private oratory of King David, when "the Lord had given him rest round about from all his enemies." "Then went King David in, and sat before the Lord, and he said, Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that Thou hast brought me hitherto? And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God; but Thou hast spoken also of Thy servant's house for a great while to come."<sup>3</sup> The poet and hero passes beyond dynastic dreams to consider the future of his people Israel, delivered from Egypt, and

<sup>1</sup> Exodus xxxiv. 30 (Dr. Moffatt's Translation).

<sup>2</sup> 2 Samuel xxii. and Psalm xviii.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Samuel vii. 18-29.

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confirmed for all time as Jehovah's peculiar possession. He saw the temple, and the palace where his children's children should wield the sceptre, after he himself had served his generation by the will of God. Sublime utterances of public prayer were authenticated by his name.

In the eleventh century of the Christian era the Jewish poet Ibn Gabirol wrote an Invocation which was meant for the morning use of Hebrew worshippers. The four verses derive their inspiration from the Book of Psalms :

### I

At the dawn I seek Thee,  
Refuge, Rock Sublime :  
Set my prayer before Thee in the morning  
And my prayer at eventime.

### II

I before Thy greatness  
Stand and am afraid ;  
All my secret thoughts Thine eye beholdeth,  
Deep within my bosom laid.

### III

And withal what is it  
Heart and tongue can do ?  
What is this my strength and what is even  
This the Spirit in me too ?

### IV

But indeed man's singing  
May seem good to Thee,  
So I praise Thee, singing, while there dwelleth  
Yet the breath of God in me.<sup>1</sup>

The voice of lonely prayer is heard in the group of five Psalms appointed for the first morning of

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Israel Abrahams in "Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels," second series, p. 93, from the translation by Nina Salaman.

the month. "I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and He heard me out of His holy hill." Psalm iii. was used by the Huguenots in persecution times as a signal for the sentinels to keep watch against sudden attack. Inscribed by old tradition, "a psalm of David when he fled from Absalom his son," it has a pathetic association with the civil wars of France. Dawn is breaking over the camp of the exiles, and the notes are heard on David's harp, "O send out Thy light and Thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto Thy holy hill."<sup>1</sup>

These early Psalms, with their voices from the darkened tent, anticipate the words of Psalm cxix. 62: "At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto Thee." In Psalm v. 3 we have the preparation for a Book of Hours: "My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up."

"There have been men of God," says Dr. Whyte, "who have so 'watched' unto prayer and have so numbered, not their days only, but their hours also—that their clock never struck without their making haste to speak again to Him, who, in an hour when we think not, will say that time, with all its years and days and hours, shall be no longer. They parted company with every past hour, and saw it going away to judgment with prayer; and they received and sanctified every new hour, consecrating its first moments to praise and prayer."<sup>2</sup>

Almost every condition of natural life has its

<sup>1</sup> Psalm xliii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> "Lord, Teach us to Pray," p. 60.



Old Testament prayer and promise. The Bible rings with the word "power," but there comes a time when the strongest must say, "Cast me not off in my old age, forsake me not when my powers fail."<sup>1</sup> This petition was often on the lips of the devout wife of Melanchthon, and has been used by thousands before and since her day. The answer is heard in Isaiah xli. 4: "Even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs I will carry you: I have made and I will bear; even I will carry and will deliver you."

Luther's first published book (1517) was an exposition of the seven penitential psalms. The Psalms and the Epistles of St. Paul seemed to him the noblest and the most difficult of Biblical writings. His first course of lectures at Wittenberg dealt with the Psalter, though he was unacquainted with Hebrew. In the Psalms he found nourishment for every need of his soul. The believer, he thought, has in them such a home as the cattle find in the meadow, men and women in the house, the bird in its nest, the mountain-goat on the high rocks, and the fish in the stream. His copy of the Psalter, widely printed, with annotations between the lines and on the margin, has been the chief treasure in the library of Wolfenbüttel. He believed that the voice of the Messiah was speaking through the harp of David, and that even the penitential prayers were offered by our Lord in the name of humanity. When he reached Psalm vi. ("that heavy Psalm"), he paused at the words, "I water my couch with

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Moffatt's Translation of Psalm lxxi. 9.

my tears," and drew the lesson that Jesus must have wept much, especially in the night, though the Gospels tell us nothing of His tears.

"The deepest of all Psalmwords," according to Friedrich Heiler,<sup>1</sup> are those of lxxiii. 25, 26, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever" (R.V.). The rendering in Luther's Bible, from which Heiler quotes, may be literally translated, "If only I have Thee I ask nothing of heaven or earth. If body and soul decay together, yet Thou, God, art evermore my heart's comfort and my portion."<sup>2</sup> Heiler sees in this passage, and in many other Psalms, an expression of the devotional life of Jeremiah, whom he calls "the father of Christian prayer." "The people of the Exile," he writes, "pour out in these songs of prayer their unspeakable suffering, but also their invincible trust. Like Jeremiah, whose book of Prophecy became their Gospel, they won their way in prayer out of the anxiety and faithlessness of the present to a victorious confidence and a firm hope for the future."<sup>3</sup>

He draws a contrast between prayer as we find it in the great mystics, and that of the prophets of Israel. The former is "a quiet longing, a

<sup>1</sup> "Das Gebet," p. 207.

<sup>2</sup> J. W. Harvey, in his translation of Otto's book, "Das Heilige" ("The Idea of the Holy"), renders these words, "When I but have Thee, I ask no question of heaven or earth." The poem of Novalis, "Wenn ich ihn nur habe," is founded on the Psalmist's thought.

<sup>3</sup> "Das Gebet," p. 207.

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blissful absorption, an enraptured beholding. Prophetic prayer is a conflict of the soul, as the whole life of prophetic spirits is a continual battle for the attainment of certainty about God, and for the comfort and salvation of the soul."

Heiler would accept in their full meaning these words of Sir George Adam Smith on Jeremiah: "He lived to see the Law fail, the Nation dispersed, and the national Altar shattered; but he gathered their fire unto his bosom and carried it not only unquenched but with a purer flame towards its everlasting future. We may say without exaggeration that what was henceforth finest in the religion of Israel had, however ancient its sources, been re-cast in the furnace of his spirit. With him the human unit in religion which had hitherto been mainly the nation was on the way to become the individual. Personal piety in later Israel largely grew out of his spiritual struggles."<sup>1</sup>

The early Christians, as Dr. Emery Barnes remarks, "turned to the Old Testament and especially to the Psalter for help in their devotions. 'O Lord who . . . didst say, Why did the Gentiles rage'—such was the beginning of the prayer which the Twelve put up under the first stroke of persecution which fell upon them after the Ascension. In the Psalms they found petition, praise, appeal, and meditation ready for their use. Their work was only to select."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Jeremiah" (1923), p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> "Early Christians at Prayer" (1924), pp. 2, 3.

## II

### NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING AND EXAMPLE

The New Testament has guided the Church through all ages in the practice of solitary prayer. Scholars accept St. Mark's Gospel as the earliest record of our Lord's life on earth, and in his first chapter the Evangelist reveals the chief sources of his Master's strength. In the evening hours, when the busiest modern physician or surgeon expects a respite from his labours, Jesus was healing the sick and casting out demons. His time for sleep must have been very short, since the whole town of lakeside people was clamouring at his door, but "in the early morning, long before daylight, he got up and went away out to a lonely spot. He was praying there when Simon and his companions hunted him out and discovered him."<sup>1</sup> St. Matthew tells us that after the feeding of the multitude, He sent the disciples to the other side of the lake, "while He dismissed the crowds," and "after He had dismissed the crowds He went up the hill by Himself to pray. When evening came He was there alone."<sup>2</sup> Each of the Synoptic Gospels preserves among the characteristics of the Divine Saviour's life on earth His need to escape from interruption and to commune with His Father under the open

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Moffatt's Translation of St. Mark i. 35, 36.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matthew xiv. 22, 23.



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heaven. St. Luke varies the earlier narrative by telling how "the crowds made inquiries about Him, came to where He was, and tried to keep Him from leaving them."<sup>1</sup>

A Spanish teacher of our day, Miguel de Unamuno, who has found his spiritual refreshment in the wild regions of the Sierra de Gredos and the Peña de Francia, dwells on our Lord's love of the high hills in the following passage: "The most sublime moral teaching that the ages and the lands of earth have ever heard is that of the Sermon on the Mount, which opens in chapter v. of St. Matthew's Gospel with these simple but lofty words: 'And seeing the multitudes He went up into a mountain: and when He was set, His disciples came unto Him, and he opened His mouth and taught them saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit,' etc. And there follows all the sublime code of Christian perfection." Unamuno recalls how the law of Moses was given from the mountain top of Sinai amid thunder, lightning, and tempest. "From a peaceful hill of Palestine, perhaps an olive garden, a pleasant sun-scented slope, the holiest teachings were proclaimed to men. When He had climbed the hill and had sat down on its summit as on a throne, with His disciples resting round Him on the ground, in touch with sacred mother earth, Jesus opened His mouth and His highest teaching flowed forth, like a river which draws its source from an inexhaustible mountain lake."<sup>2</sup>

Within the Sermon on the Mount lies our Lord's

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke iv. 42.

<sup>2</sup> "Andanzas y Visiones Españolas" (1922), p. 36.

great passage on private prayer. "When you pray go into your room and shut the door ; pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is in secret will reward you."<sup>1</sup>

Because they did not allow themselves full leisure for solitary prayer amid the distractions of business, even men like Lacordaire and Henri Perreyve were overstrained, as Père Gratry tells us, in their closing years. "Not by going far from Paris can we secure freedom of heart for meditation. That depends on the unity of our work and on the *degree* of *interiority*. It is solitude with God, *clauso ostio*."<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Whyte would have found himself in agreement with the French theologian. "There is this fine and noble thing about prayer," he writes, "that the acceptableness of it, and the power of it, are in direct proportion to the secrecy and the spirituality of it. As its stealth is : as its silence is : as its hiddenness away with God is : as its unsuspectedness and undeservedness with men is : as its pure goodness, pure love, and pure goodwill are—so does prayer perform its magnificent part when it is alone with God."<sup>3</sup>

Even when the door is shut, the mind, distracted by outside business, may occupy the time with idle speaking. Claudius, the guilty king in "Hamlet," kneels alone, a disquieted but unrepentant sinner.

"My words fly up, my thoughts remain below.  
Words without thoughts never to heaven go."

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Moffatt's Translation.

<sup>2</sup> "Henri Perreyve" (ninth French edition), p. 233.

<sup>3</sup> "Lord, Teach us to Pray," pp. 11, 12.

It was disciples whom Jesus warned against the vain repetitions of the Gentiles who think they shall be heard for their much speaking. "Be not therefore like unto them, for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him." Then He gave that short model prayer on which volumes have been written. The preceding verses were an admonition against its hasty and irreverent use. "You might as well stand on a hill and talk to the moon," wrote C. H. Spurgeon, "as kneel down and hurry through the Lord's Prayer, and then think that you have prayed."

"Jesus prays for Himself," says a recent writer, "for His friends and followers, and then for the whole world. All we know of Him as a man of prayer suggests the repose of a complete trustfulness, combined with an eager spirit of active co-operation with the divine will, which characterises an ideal filial relationship. The problem of prayer would be solved for all men if they exercised its privileges and responsibilities in the spirit of Jesus, and a mighty force would be released for the furtherance of the divine will in the universe at large."<sup>1</sup>

### THE LORD'S PRAYER

"Who has ever understood?" asked Luther, "all the meaning of these words, 'Our Father which art in heaven'? By faith in these words we know that the God who made heaven and earth

<sup>1</sup> "Providence: Divine and Human," by Principal Griffith-Jones, p. 101.

is our Father, and that we are His children and none can hurt us."

Near the close of Thackeray's novel, "The Newcomes," we find this passage: "Boy presently fell a-crying: in spite of all the battle and fury, there was sleep in his eyes.

"'Maria is too busy, I suppose, to put him to bed,' said Clive, with a sad smile. 'Shall we do it, father? Come, Tommy, my son,' and he folded his arms round the child, and walked with him to the upper regions. The old man's<sup>1</sup> eyes lighted up; his scared thoughts returned to him; he followed his two children up the stairs, and saw his grandson in his little bed; and as we walked home with him, he told me how sweetly Boy had said 'Our Father,' and prayed God bless all those who loved him, as they laid him to rest.

"So these three generations had joined in that supplication: the strong man, humbled by trial and grief, whose loyal heart was yet full of love; the child, of the sweet age of those little ones whom the Blessed Speaker of the prayer first bade to come to Him; and the old man, whose heart was well-nigh as tender and as innocent, and whose day was approaching when he should be drawn to the bosom of the Eternal Pity."

Wordsworth wrote in his seventy-ninth year to his friend John Peace: "Many thanks to you for referring to the text in Scripture which I quoted to you so long ago, 'Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done.' He who does not find support and consolation there will find it nowhere. God

<sup>1</sup> Colonel Newcome.



grant that it may be continued to me and mine, and to all sufferers."

After the death of his daughter Dora (Mrs. Quillinan), Wordsworth had written to John Taylor Coleridge, "'Thy will be done' is perpetually in my thoughts. Upon that rock our consolation is built."

It has been difficult for men to understand the inner meaning of the petition for daily bread. Francis Parkman tells that the Indian warrior chief Membertou, who had passed his hundredth year, was baptized in 1611 by the Jesuit missionary Biard. He was taught to say the Lord's Prayer. At the petition, "Give us this day our daily bread," the chief remonstrated, saying, "If I ask for nothing but bread, I shall get no fish or moose-meat."<sup>1</sup>

There was a deeper understanding of the petition in the words of George Sand: "To pray, as some religious people do, for rain or sunshine, potatoes or money, to pray against hail or thunder, sickness or death, is pure idolatry, but to ask for courage, wisdom, love, is not to reverse the order of heaven's immutable laws. It is to draw closer to a hearth which would not continually attract us if, by its very nature, it were not capable of warming us."

"I think," wrote George Tyrrell, "that as we understand things better we pray less and less for temporal benefits or even for miraculous providences of any sort, and trust ourselves rather to the 'determinism,' which, harsh and ruthless

<sup>1</sup> "Pioneers of France in the New World" (Centenary Edition), p. 299.



though it seems, is but the will of Him whose wisdom reaches from end to end and disposes of all things sweetly. We begin with 'If it be possible, let the Chalice pass,' and end with 'Since it may not pass, Thy will be done.' Though God condescends to the simpler faith, I cannot doubt but that the stronger pleases Him better, the faith of Job or of Christ. *Calicem quem dedit mihi Pater nonne bibam ex illo?*"<sup>1</sup>

Anthony Trollope, in "The Three Clerks," tells how "the devil pleaded for the soul of Alaric Tudor. Alas! he did not plead in vain. Let him have but a fair hearing, and he seldom does. 'Tis in this way that the truth of the awful mystery, the fall of man, comes home to us; that we cannot hear the devil plead, and resist the charm of his eloquence. To listen is to be lost. 'Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil!' Let that petition come forth from a man's heart, a true and earnest prayer, and he will be so led that he shall not hear the charmer, let him charm ever so wisely."

#### PRIVATE PRAYER IN THE EPISTLES

If scholars are justified in assigning to First Thessalonians perhaps the earliest place in the New Testament canon, St. Paul's words to his converts, "Pray without ceasing," or "Never give up prayer," may have been written within twenty years of our Lord's death. The Apostle encourages these believers at the outset with the assurance of his own intercession. "We mention you constantly in our prayers." And again he

<sup>1</sup> "George Tyrrell's Letters," edited by M. D. Petre, p. 204.

cries out, "How can I render thanks enough to God for you, for all the joy you make me feel in the presence of our God? Night and day I pray specially that I may see your faces and supply what is defective in your faith. May our God and Father and our Lord Jesus direct my way to you."<sup>1</sup>

We are apt to forget that the Apostle and his converts were immersed in the cares of business, and were struggling to earn a livelihood. Some of the Christians at Thessalonica must have been slaves whose time was hardly ever at their own disposal; whose full energy of mind and body was required for their secular concerns. Yet for this purpose of prayer Paul treats them as leisured men. In the words of Dr. Denney, "Time is a thing of which we have abundance."

Writing to his royal pupil, Frederick William of Prussia, Dr. Godet said, "If the King said to you, 'At any hour, you may come to me without knocking; day and night my room is open to you, and all my power is at your service for everything that concerns you—what a privilege! Is not an equal, nay an even greater privilege contained in that magnificent permission, 'Pray without ceasing'?"

It is literally true that since the Apostle gave that "permission," the voice of prayer has never been silent in the Church. "Prayer has been universal among all the saints," wrote C. H. Spurgeon. "There have been saints of different moulds and temperaments, but they have all prayed. Some of them have been, like Heman

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Moffatt's Translation.

and Asaph, masters of song, and they have prayed ; others could not sing, but they have all prayed. To-day you may meet with all sorts of Christians, holding many kinds of doctrines, but they all pray ; and what is most curious, they all pray alike too. You can scarcely detect a difference when they pray.

‘ The saints in prayer appear as one  
In word, and deed, and mind.’

A man may preach doctrine contrary to the grace of God : but get him on his knees, and he prays to God for grace, as heartily as John Calvin himself. We are one at the mercy-seat.”

St. Paul depends on the intercessions of his friends. “ Let me have your co-operation in prayer,” he writes to the Corinthian Church, “ so that many a soul may render thanks on my behalf.”<sup>1</sup> He never lays down an actual model of prayer for the Churches, though he exhorts them frequently to the practice of devotion, and tells them something of his own inner experiences. The answer to St. Paul’s threefold petition, which came in the words “ My grace is sufficient for thee,” brought comfort to the heart of Bunyan. The author of “ Grace Abounding ” had been troubled in mind because, when he meditated on this promise, he could not accept for himself the words “ for thee.”

While he was in a meeting of God’s people, full of sadness and terror, “ these words,” he says, “ did with great power suddenly break in upon me : *My grace is sufficient for thee, My grace is*

<sup>1</sup> 2 Corinthians i. 11 (Moffatt).

*sufficient for thee, My grace is sufficient for thee*, three times together; but oh! methought that every word was a mighty word unto me, as *my*, and *grace*, and *sufficient*, and *for thee*; they were then, and sometimes are still, far bigger than others be. At which time my understanding was so enlightened, that I was as though I had seen the Lord Jesus look down from heaven through the tiles upon me, and direct these words unto me."

Weinel has called attention to a certain shyness and reserve in St. Paul's directions, and to the absence from his writings of any pattern prayer.<sup>1</sup> "Something of what his prayer-life was," says Dr. Reaveley Glover, "he lets us see in the Eighth of Romans."<sup>2</sup> There he tells that "the Spirit assists us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray aright, but the Spirit pleads for us with sighs that are beyond words, and He who searches the human heart knows what is in the mind of the Spirit, since the Spirit pleads before God for the saints."<sup>3</sup>

Of St. Paul's prison-prayers Dr. Whyte has written, "As he kneels on his prison floor, its dark roof becomes a canopy of light: and its walls of iron become crystal till Paul sees the whole family in heaven and on earth gathered together in one, and all filled with the fulness of God."

<sup>1</sup> See Heiler, "Das Gebet," p. 27.   <sup>2</sup> "Paul of Tarsus," p. 110.

<sup>3</sup> Romans viii. 26, 27 (Moffatt).

## CHAPTER I

### THE CHURCH IN THE PAGAN EMPIRE

WE think in this chapter of the first centuries after our Lord had withdrawn His visible presence from earth, "and His Apostles after Him were laid asleep."<sup>1</sup> The Church, under the Pagan Empire, was looking stedfastly into heaven. The humblest believer possessed the right, and with it the sacred obligation, of personal approach to God. Confession, aspiration, thanksgiving, were no longer confined within the formal bounds of an ancient liturgy. "The whole of life was a continuous worship, and the great feature of that worship was prayer."<sup>2</sup> "A Christian who did not pray every day, and even frequently, would not have been considered a Christian at all."<sup>3</sup>

For more than two centuries the Government treated Christianity as the one foreign religion which the State could not tolerate. The cry of the persecutor, "*Non licet esse vos*" ("You are not permitted to exist") had a sound like the shout of "Christian" when raised in modern times among the pilgrim throng at Mecca. But, as Professor Bury shows, the hindrances imposed

<sup>1</sup> Milton's "Areopagitica."

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Warde Fowler, "The Religious Experience of the Roman People," p. 468.

<sup>3</sup> Monsignor Duchesne, "Christian Worship: its Origin and Evolution," p. 446.



by the State "were more than compensated by the facilities of steady and safe intercourse and communication, which not only helped the new idea to travel but enabled its preachers and adherents to organise their work and keep in constant touch with one another."

Out of the night of persecution prayer and praise ascended. The Book of Revelation is now assigned by scholars to the Domitianic age. We hear the voice of the early Church in this ascription, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory for ever and ever, Amen."

The heart of the writer, says a learned expositor, leaps up at the very thought of Jesus. "Nor can he pass on without the thrilling tribute of praise to Him who loves His people and has loosed them from their sins by His blood. Thus early the strain of the redeemed is on his lips, a strain to which, as we read the Book, we shall listen again and again."<sup>1</sup>

It was a dark age in which the earliest voice of Christian prayer was heard. "In point of fact," writes Dr. Marcus Dods, "the world has never been so ingeniously and exhaustively wicked as in Rome during the first century." He quotes the words of Lecky in his "History of European Morals": "In no period had brute force more completely triumphed, in none was the thirst for material advantages more intense, in very few was vice more ostentatiously glorified." Tacitus said plainly that virtue was then a

<sup>1</sup> "The Revelation of John," by Prof. Arthur S. Peake, p. 212.

sentence of death. "Suddenly in the midst of this sated and despairing world appeared a people with the radiance of renewed youth and undoubting hope on its face, its eye brilliant with new-found truth, its bearing erect from very gladness."<sup>1</sup>

Many of the first Christians were humble folk. Their dwellings in the Imperial City, in the age of Nero and Domitian, lay for the most part in the poor Jewish quarter, the narrow slums between the Tiber and the Janiculan hill. The heathen who examined the new religion would have observed this extraordinary fact, says Dr. Döllinger, "that a religion of prayer was superseding the religion of ceremonies and invocation of gods; that it encouraged all, even the most uneducated, to pray, or in other words, to meditate and exercise the mind in self-scrutiny and contemplation of God."<sup>2</sup>

Hours of prayer were observed among Christians from a very early time. "The custom was established of devoting the last moments of the night, the time between cockcrow and the sunrise, to private devotion, and also the end of the day, the gloomy hour when the sun disappears, when shadows fall and the household lamps are lit. These were the fundamental prayers universally in use—the morning and evening prayer, or matins and vespers."<sup>3</sup>

Prayer was offered everywhere in the Holy

<sup>1</sup> "Erasmus and Other Essays," p. 284.

<sup>2</sup> "The First Age of Christianity and the Church" (quoted by Dr. Warde Fowler, *op. cit.*, p. 468).

<sup>3</sup> Mgr. Duchesne, *op. cit.*, p. 446.

Name of Jesus. The promise of the departing Saviour must have been known and verified long before it was written for descendants in the Fourth Gospel : " For I am going to the Father, and I will do whatever you ask in My name, that the Father may be glorified in the Son ; I will do whatever you ask me in My name." <sup>1</sup>

Gibbon quotes the " splendid exaggeration " of Justin Martyr : " There exists not a people, whether Greek or barbarian, or any other race of men, by whatsoever appellation or manners they may be distinguished, however ignorant of arts or agriculture, whether they dwell under tents, or wander about in covered waggons, among whom prayers are not offered up in the name of a crucified Jesus to the Father and Creator of all things." <sup>2</sup>

From the catacombs of Rome, burial places of the early Christians, prayer rises like the music of that hidden brook, by whose bank Dante and Virgil passed to the upper light. W. R. Lethaby says that the figures in the catacombs known as *orantes*, who are shown with extended arms, are symbols of the soul in prayer. There is little in the catacomb paintings, he remarks, which has peculiar application to the grave. " The ideas underlying the choice of subjects are of resurrection and salvation, thoughts which are further expressed in the simple epitaphs which speak of hope, peace, and eternal welfare. Some of the subjects chosen have, indeed, been compared with

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Moffatt's Translation of St. John xiv. 13, 14.

<sup>2</sup> Prof. J. B. Bury's edition of " The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," vol. ii, pp. 63, 64.

the ancient prayers for the dying : ‘ Deliver, O Lord, Thy servant as Thou didst deliver Enoch and Elias from the common death, as Thou didst deliver Noah from the Deluge, Job from his torments, Isaac from the sacrifice, Moses from the hand of Pharaoh, Daniel from the lions, the three young men from the furnace, and Susannah from false accusation—so deign to deliver the soul of Thy servant.’ ”<sup>1</sup>

“ In the witness of the catacombs,” says a German writer, “ we have a final proof of the centrality of prayer in the entire Christian life from baptism to death. We see, too, how high a value was placed on the power of intercession and how the Christian in prayer felt himself in perpetual contact with the spiritual and heavenly world. The presence of the Lord, the nearness of His angels and an inward communion with the saints and with the blessed dead, was for him no mere poetic image, uncertain fancy, or beautiful and edifying mode of speech, but a reality and a truth not less reliable than the impressions of the world of sense. In prayer every Christian had the actual experience of that which he understood in literal meaning, that angels and saints ascended and descended from the throne of the Highest, nay more, that his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was personally present.”

<sup>1</sup> “ Cambridge Medieval History,” vol. i, p. 601.

<sup>2</sup> “ Das Gebet in der ältesten Christenheit ” (1901), by Eduard Freiherr von der Goltz, p. 321.



## CHAPTER II

### EARLY CHRISTIAN FATHERS

IRENÆUS tells us that Clement of Rome, the first of the great Christian Fathers, had "himself seen the blessed Apostles, and had conferred with them, and had still their preaching sounding in his ears, and their traditions before his eyes." Among these traditions was that of public and private prayer. Clement, who had passed through the Domitianic persecution, wrote the first Christian supplication outside the New Testament. Scholars discover within it some traces of liturgical form, but far more important is the proof that the early Church had understood the petition, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us"; and had accepted as her own the Lord's prayer for His executioners: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Clement wrote his Epistle to the Corinthians soon after the close of the persecution. The bearers and the writer of the letter seem to have had a close connection with the Imperial household. "The persecuted and the persecutor met face to face," says Bishop Lightfoot; "they mixed together in the common affairs of men; they even lived under the same roof. Thus the utmost caution was necessary, that collisions



might not be provoked. We can understand therefore with what feelings one who thus carried his life in his hands would pen the opening words of the letter, where he excuses the tardiness of the Roman Church in writing to their Corinthian brethren by a reference to 'the sudden and repeated calamities and reverses' under which they had suffered. Not a word is said about the nature of the calamities ; not a word here or elsewhere about their authors. No greater contrast can be conceived to the ferocity and passion of these bloody scenes which accompanied the death of Domitian, than the singular gentleness and forbearance which distinguishes this letter throughout. In the prayer for princes and governors, which appears in the liturgical ending, this sentiment finds noblest expression. 'Guide our steps to walk in holiness and righteousness and singleness of heart, and to do such things as are good and well-pleasing in Thy sight, and in the sight of our rulers.' 'Give concord and peace to us and to all that dwell on the earth—that we may be saved, while we render obedience to Thine Almighty and most excellent Name, and to our rulers and governors upon the earth. Thou, O Lord and Master, hast given them the power of sovereignty through Thine excellent and unspeakable might, that we, knowing the glory and honour which Thou hast given them, may submit ourselves unto them, in nothing resisting Thy will. Grant unto them, therefore, O Lord, health, peace, concord, stability, that they may administer the government which Thou hast given them without failure. For Thou,

O heavenly Master, King of the ages, givest to the sons of men glory and honour and power over all things that are upon the earth. Do Thou, Lord, direct their counsel according to that which is good and well-pleasing in Thy sight, that, administering with peace and gentleness, with godliness, the power which Thou hast given them, they may obtain Thy favour.' ”

Dr. Lightfoot describes this prayer as “truly sublime—sublime in its utterances and still more sublime in its silence.”<sup>1</sup>

Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, was condemned to the wild beasts in the reign of Trajan, and travelled by slow stages to Rome to undergo his martyrdom. “I am the wheat of God,” he said, “and I am ground by the teeth of wild beasts, that I may be found pure bread.” “With an almost fierce enthusiasm,” says Bishop Lightfoot, “he forecasts the supreme moment, when the mangling of his limbs and the crunching of his bones shall at length confer upon him the coveted honour of discipleship.”

At Smyrna, on his westward journey, Ignatius met Polycarp, and was hospitably received by the Church in that city. From Troas, a further stopping-place, he wrote to his younger friend a letter from which these words are taken :

“I exhort thee in the grace wherewith thou art clothed to press forward in thy race. Vindicate thine office in all diligence of flesh and of spirit. Bear all men as the Lord also beareth thee. Suffer all men in love, as also thou doest. Give thyself to increasing prayers. Ask for

<sup>1</sup> “The Apostolic Fathers,” Part I, vol. i, pp. 383, 384.

larger wisdom than thou hast. Bear the maladies of all, as a perfect athlete. The season requireth thee, as pilots require wind, and as a storm-tossed mariner a haven, that it may attain unto God. Be sober as God's athlete. Stand thou firm as an anvil when it is smitten. It is the part of a great athlete to receive blows and to conquer."<sup>1</sup>

Polycarp obeyed the injunctions of "this brave general officer in the noble army of martyrs." Among his many titles to honour with the Christians, not the least was his perseverance in prayer. A disciple of St. John the Apostle, he links the earthly life of Jesus with that of the Church to-day. In the words of Bishop Lightfoot, "St. John, Polycarp, Irenaeus—this was the succession which guaranteed the continuity of the evangelical record and the apostolic teaching. The long life of St. John, followed by the long life of Polycarp, had secured this result."<sup>2</sup>

Polycarp suffered martyrdom at Smyrna in the reign of Antoninus Pius. "When apprehended, he requested his captors to allow him a short interval for prayer. His request was granted, and for two hours he stood praying, so that all present were moved by his fervent utterances." When he was led into the stadium "the pro-consul urged him to swear by the genius of Cæsar and say 'Away with the atheists.' He caught up the last words of his judge. With

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Bishop Lightfoot, "The Apostolic Fathers," Part II, vol. i, p. 443. The martyrdom of St. Ignatius is placed somewhere about the year A.D. 110. A veil rests over the actual scene and date of his death.

<sup>2</sup> "The Apostolic Fathers," Part II, vol. i, p. 474.

solemn visage looking up to heaven and waving his hand, he cried 'Away with the atheists.' The proconsul, perhaps mistaking this as a sign of yielding, pressed him further: 'Swear, and I will set thee free; revile Christ.' His answer is memorable: 'Fourscore and six years have I served Him, and He hath done me no wrong. How then can I speak evil of my King, who saved me?'<sup>1</sup> Polycarp was condemned to die by fire, but an ancient tradition says that the flames refused to touch the man who lived in constant communion with God through prayer.

"Bound to the stake, no flames appalled,  
But arched o'er him an honouring vault."<sup>2</sup>

Tertullian, Origen, and Cyprian were three Fathers whose lives lie within the ages of persecution. The work of Origen on prayer is one of the standard writings of the third century. Bishop Westcott says of this Father, "His whole life was one unbroken prayer, one ceaseless effort after close fellowship with the Unseen and Eternal." Origen advised Christians to pray standing, with eyes and hands uplifted. Tertullian and Cyprian both wrote commentaries on the Lord's Prayer. Tertullian gave this exhortation to the soldiers of the Cross. "Under arms in prayer, guard the standard of your General. The angels pray; every creature prays; the cattle and wild beasts bend their knees and pray; nay, the birds, rising up from their nests, upraise themselves, and instead of hands, expand the

<sup>1</sup> "The Apostolic Fathers," Part II, vol. i, p. 453.

<sup>2</sup> Emerson, in his poem "Worship."



cross of their wings, and sing something that seems like prayer.”<sup>1</sup>

Clement of Alexandria's words on prayer are quoted by Dr. Marcus Dods : “The whole life of the Gnostic is a holy festival. His sacrifices are prayers and praises, and the reading of the Scriptures before meals; psalms and hymns during meals, and before retiring for the night : and during the night, prayers again.” “It is quite true,” adds Dr. Dods, “that Clement declares that the Gnostic, or more advanced Christian, is not dependent on the seasons and places to which others confine their worship; at the same time, he distinctly commends both stated hours and special occasions of prayer. He does maintain that the perfect man is always in the enjoyment of communion with God; in language of great beauty and force he represents the joyful and constant fellowship of the trusting soul with God, and tells how God hears not only the voice, but the thought; but he nowhere denies the necessity of stated and special prayer.”<sup>2</sup>

The petition of St. Paul for the Colossians was fulfilled for the Christian Church during the ages of persecution :

“May His glorious might nerve you with full power to endure and be patient cheerfully whatever comes.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Ernest Leigh-Bennett : “Handbook of the Early Christian Fathers,” p. 69.

<sup>2</sup> “Erasmus and Other Essays,” pp. 158, 159.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Moffatt's Translation of Colossians i. 11.



## CHAPTER III

### MONICA AND AUGUSTINE

PRIVATE prayer under the Christian Empire is beautifully exemplified in the life of St. Monica and her son St. Augustine. The greatest of the Church Fathers was born in A.D. 354 at Thagaste in Numidia. Of his father Patricius there is little record, but Monica has a place all her own among the women of ancient history. The tenderness and grace of her character are disclosed in her son's "Confessions." He describes her as "that chaste and sober widow, so frequent in alms-deeds, so full of duty and service to Thy saints, no day intermitting the oblation at Thine altar ; twice a day, morning and evening without any intermission, coming to Thy Church, not for idle tattlings and old wives' fables, but that she might hear Thee in Thy discourses, and Thou her in her prayers. Couldst Thou despise and reject from Thy aid the tears of such an one, wherewith she begged of Thee not gold or silver, nor any mutable or passing good, but the salvation of her son's soul ? Thou, by whose gift she was such ? Never, Lord. Yea, Thou wert at hand, and wert hearing and doing, in that order wherein Thou hadst determined before, that it should be done."

Writing of his schooldays, Augustine says, "I came in contact with some who prayed to Thee, and I learned something from them, and thought of Thee as best I could, as some great One, who though we could not see or touch Thee, couldst hear and help us. For as a boy I began to pray to Thee, who art my refuge and my help."

Among those from whom he learned, the chief was his Christian mother. There is a modern parallel in the life of Bishop Handley Moule of Durham. "Times without number," he wrote, "my child-eyes watched my mother, morning and night, kneeling in long communion with her Lord in prayer, while I wondered how she could find so much to say in silence to her invisible Friend, and insensibly drew deep into my soul the thought as a primary fact of existence, that prayer was a work, most real, most momentous."<sup>1</sup>

It was a profound grief to Monica that her son was deluded in early manhood by the Manichæan heresies. "For almost nine years passed," he tells us, "during which I wallowed in that deep mire, amid the darkness of error, and all my efforts to rise seemed only to sink me the more deeply in it, though all the while that chaste widow ceased not at every time of praying to bemoan me before Thee. And her prayers came before Thy face, and yet Thou didst suffer me still to be involved and enveloped in that blackness of darkness."

At one time Monica refused to have her son in

<sup>1</sup> "Expositor," August 1920, p. 82.

her house and at her table, so strong was her hatred of his errors, but she was cheered by the vision of a youth in bright garments, who admonished her to wait patiently for the answer to her prayers.

When Augustine travelled from Carthage to Rome, it was against the wish of Monica, who grievously bewailed his journey, and followed him as far as the sea. On the night of his sailing "I scarcely persuaded her," he says, "to stay in a place hard by our ship, where was an Oratory in memory of the blessed Cyprian. That night I privily departed, but she was not behind in weeping and prayer. And what, O Lord, was she with so many tears asking of Thee, but that Thou wouldest not suffer me to sail? But Thou, in the depth of Thy counsels and hearing the main point of her desire, regardedst not what she then asked, that Thou mightest make me what she ever asked." Later on Monica followed her son to Rome, and found that though he was not yet ready for baptism, he had at least abandoned his heretical errors. Together they listened at Milan to the teaching of St. Ambrose. "She had brought me before Thee on the bier of her thought, that Thou mightest say to the son of the widow, 'Young man, I say unto thee, Arise,' and that he might arise and begin to speak, and that Thou mightest deliver him to his mother."

Of Monica her son has said that she "lived for prayer." When in her fifty-sixth year, she lay dying at Ostia, and knew that it would not be granted her to rest beside her husband

Patricius in African soil, she said to her son, "Here shall you bury your mother." "I held my peace," writes Augustine, "and refrained from weeping, but my brother spake something, wishing for her, as the happier lot, that she might die, not in a strange place, but in her own land. Whereat she, with anxious look, checking him with her eyes, for that he still savoured such things, and then looking upon me: 'Behold,' saith she, 'what he saith'; and soon after to us both, 'Lay,' she saith, 'this body anywhere; let not the care for that any way disquiet you; this only I request, that you would remember me at the Lord's altar, wherever you be.'"

St. Monica stands forth in the ancient Church as an example of importunity in pleading. The conversion of her son, whose influence on Western Christianity has been second only to that of St. Paul, was regarded by himself as the Divine answer to her supplications. Some of his own prayers and thanksgivings belong to the most precious devotional literature of the Church. His "Confessions" are cast into the form of a prayer. "That," says a German scholar, "is surely a curious way of writing, to recount one's life-story to God; but it carries a pledge of sincerity towards men also." As a modern translator adds, "Faith's venture and its vindication are the great issues that dominate the writer's thought. That God is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him; that Christ has humbled Himself to become our brother, and has broken the bonds of death;



that the very powers we think of as natural are truly of God, and are never perfectly possessed until received as from His hand—these are the lessons, familiar but inexhaustible, taught by this review of life.”<sup>1</sup>

The “Confessions,” as Mr. Gladstone wrote at the age of twenty-five, “have a wonderful force and inimitable sweetness and simplicity.” Here is an example of a private thanksgiving by this great Doctor of the Church. “Thanks be unto Thee, my Delight, my Honour, my Confidence, and my God, thanks be unto Thee for all Thy gifts; but do Thou keep them safe for me. For so shalt Thou keep me safe also, and the gifts which Thou hast given me shall be increased, and I shall have my being with Thee for ever and ever, for even the possession of being is Thy gift.”

Thinking of old age—and he lived to seventy-six—Augustine offered this prayer of humble dependence upon the love and care of God: “O Lord, our God, let us hope in the shadow of Thy wings, and do Thou protect us and bear us up. Thou wilt bear us, Thou wilt bear us as little ones, and even to old age Thou wilt bear us. When Thou art our strength we are strong, but when we are our own strength we are weak. Our good ever lives in Thy presence, and it is because we have turned away our faces from it that we have become perverted. Let us now return to it, O Lord, that we may not be turned away for ever. Our good lives with Thee and can suffer no loss, because Thou Thyself art our

<sup>1</sup> W. Montgomery's Introduction.



Good, and we have no need to fear that there will be no place for us to return to because we have fallen away; for though we be absent from it the home of the soul falls not into decay, for the home of the soul is Thine eternity."

## CHAPTER IV

### MONKS AT PRAYER

ST. Augustine tells us that when he was talking at Milan before his conversion with his fellow-countryman Ponticianus, a Christian from Africa, the conversation "branched off to the flocks of Thy people whose folds were Thy monasteries, and their way of life, which was as a sweet savour unto Thee, and the deserts made fruitful by the eremites, of all which we knew nothing. And we found there was a monastery at Milan filled with virtuous brethren having Ambrose for its patron; and we had never known of it."

"The last dark days of the falling empire in the West," says a historian, "were brightened by the rising light of monasticism. In the days when the ancient world of Rome was obviously nearing its end, no names shine brighter than those of monks, whether in Church or State."<sup>1</sup>

Monasteries were homes of prayer and work. St. Antony, the founder of Western monasticism, was born in Egypt about the year 250. St. Augustine says in his "Confessions": "For I had heard of Antony, that coming in during the reading of the Gospel, he received the admonition, as if what was being read was spoken to him, *Go, sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and*

<sup>1</sup> Prof. Ian C. Hannah, "Christian Monasticism" (1925), p. 71.

*thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come and follow Me.* And by such oracle he was forthwith converted unto Thee.”<sup>1</sup> After seeking perfection for fifteen years among the ascetics of his native place, Antony went into complete solitude, and lived at a lonely spot on the east bank of the Nile. In this retreat, as Dom Butler writes,<sup>2</sup> he spent twenty years in the strictest seclusion, wholly given up to prayer and religious exercises. A number of those who wished to lead the ascetic life congregated around him, desiring that he should be their teacher and guide. At last he complied with their wishes and came forth from his seclusion, to become the inaugurator and first organiser of Christian monasticism.

St. Basil divided the time of his monks between prayer, work, and the reading of Holy Scripture. “They rose for the common psalmody while it was still night, and chanted the divine praises till the dawn; six times each day did they assemble in the church for prayer. Their work was field labour and farming. St. Gregory Nazianzen speaks of the ploughing and vine-dressing, the wood-drawing and stone-hewing, the planting and draining.”<sup>3</sup> Under the rule of St. Benedict, whose name carries us into the sixth century, six or seven hours daily were occupied with manual work and three to five hours with reading or study. The primary and essential work of the monk—the *Opus Dei*—was the daily chanting of the canonical office in the

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Pusey’s Translation, p. 171.

<sup>2</sup> “Cambridge Medieval History,” vol. i, p. 522.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 528, 529.

choir. "It is probable," says Dom Butler, "that the daily common prayer took some four to four and a half hours, being chanted throughout and not merely recited in a monotone. Mass was celebrated only on Sundays and holy days. Private prayer was taken for granted, and was provided for, but not legislated for, being left to personal devotion." St. Benedict defined a monastery as a school of the Lord, and the one thing he required from the novice was that "in very deed he seek God."

St. Simeon Stylites on his pillar was an object of reverence, because he was believed to have entered more completely than other men into Divine communion. "In him," says Professor Hannah,<sup>1</sup> "we recognise more strongly than ever the abiding influence of Asia. After ascetic practices of many kinds, including the burial of his person up to the neck for many months, he became the most famous of pillar saints. He never descended from his constantly heightening column, until at last he said his prayers and took his scanty food and troubled rest sixty feet above the plain. Enormous crowds of pilgrims from every corner of the world between Britain and Persia thronged to the spot, while at the base of the pillar devout disciples watched and counted how often the saint aloft spread out his arms in fervent prayer. Theodore calls him 'that great miracle of the world'; Evagrius 'that angel upon earth.'" The body of Simeon Stylites "was taken to Antioch with more than imperial magnificence that it might be a protection to that

<sup>1</sup> "Christian Monasticism," p. 49.

defenceless city ; while around his pillar was erected one of the finest churches of the East." Such men as he were believed by contemporaries to be "scaling the steep incline to heaven in unbroken communion with God,"<sup>1</sup> or in Tennyson's words :

" Battering the gates of heaven with storms of prayer."

Sulpicius Severus writes of his friend St. Martin of Tours, one of the greatest monks of the West : " Even when he appeared to be doing something else he still was engaged in prayer. O, truly blessed man in whom there was no guile—judging no man, condemning no man, returning evil for evil to none."

<sup>1</sup> " Christian Monasticism," p. 50.



## CHAPTER V

### VOICES FROM OLD BRITAIN AND IRELAND

THE name of St. Patrick burns like a star amid Western annals of the fifth century. When the Roman legions were withdrawn from Britain (*circa* A.D. 410) to aid in the defence of Italy against the Goths, the Apostle of Ireland was a young man between twenty and thirty. His birthplace, Bannavem Taberniæ, a half-Roman, half-British settlement, has been located by scholars in Northants or Glamorganshire. The son of a deacon, Patrick was instructed in the Christian faith, and obtained a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. In his seventeenth year he was carried as a captive to Ireland.

“While he ate the bitter bread of bondage,” writes Professor Bury, “a profound spiritual change came over him. He had never given much thought to his religion, but now that he was a thrall among strangers, ‘the Lord,’ he says, ‘opened the sense of my unbelief.’ The ardour of religious emotion, ‘the love and fear of God,’ so fully consumed his soul that in a single day or night he would offer a hundred prayers; and he describes himself, in woodland or on mountain-side, rising from his bed before dawn and going forth to pray in hail, or rain, or snow.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Life of St. Patrick,” by Prof. J. B. Bury, p. 30.

Ireland, to the young Patrick, was an *Ultima Thule*, and he prayed earnestly for deliverance. In a dream the message came to him, "Behold, thy ship is ready." After a long perilous flight, he reached the shore near Wicklow. "The ship of his dreams was there, and was soon to sail. It was a ship of traders ; their cargo was aboard, and part of the cargo consisted of dogs, probably Irish wolf-hounds. Patrick spoke to some of the crew, and made a proposal of service. He was willing to work his passage to the port to which the vessel was bound. The proposal seems to have been at first entertained, but afterwards the shipmaster objected, and said sharply, 'Nay, in no wise shalt thou come with us.' The disappointment, as safety seemed within grasp, must have been bitter, and Patrick turned away from the mariners to seek the lodging where he had found shelter. As he went he prayed, and before he finished his prayer he heard one of the crew shouting behind him, 'Come quickly, for they are calling you.' The shipmaster had been persuaded to forgo his objections, and Patrick set sail from the shores of Ireland with this rough company."<sup>1</sup>

Amid the perils of the journey, his prayers sustained the courage of his shipmates. In after-years he revisited the scenes of his captivity, and climbed the mountain still known as Croagh Patrick.

"To the summit of this peak," writes his learned biographer, "Patrick is said to have retired for lonely contemplation and prayer.

<sup>1</sup> "Life of St. Patrick," by Prof. J. B. Bury, pp. 31, 32.

Legend declared that he remained there fasting forty days and forty nights. In after-ages men pictured him encompassed by the saints of Ireland. God said to the souls of the saints, not only of the dead and living, but of the still unborn, 'Go up, O ye saints, to the top of the mountain which is higher than all the other mountains of the west, and bless the folk of Ireland.' Then the souls mounted, and they flitted round the lofty peak in the form of birds, darkening the air, so great was their multitude. Thus God heartened Patrick by revealing to him the fruit of his labours."<sup>1</sup>

The "Confession" of St. Patrick, from which in the main the authentic facts of his life are drawn, was written in old age, and was intended, like St. Teresa's "Autobiography," as a thanksgiving for the wonderful dealing of God with himself. Though he claimed none of those magical powers which Church tradition ascribed to him, "his own strange life seemed to Patrick more marvelous than any miracle in that special meaning of the word."<sup>2</sup> He believed in personal providences, and in the might of intercessory prayer.

Wild Donegal was the home of Scotland's royal missionary, St. Columba (A.D. 521-597). The name "Columcille," or "dove of the Church," was given him in youth because he frequented the place of prayer.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Life of St. Patrick," by Prof. J. B. Bury, pp. 131, 132.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197.

<sup>3</sup> A. R. McEwen, "History of the Church in Scotland," vol. i, p. 48. "The Life of St. Columba," by Adamnan, is described by Dr. McEwen as "one of the most valuable surviving records of primitive Christianity."

On a low island of gneiss-rock off the coast of Mull, he founded the monastery of Iona. Like the captains of Polar expeditions he maintained an absolute authority,<sup>1</sup> living by himself in a hut somewhat larger than those of his brethren, and moving about by wagon, attended by his servant. The monks came in time to number 150, and their deliberations were guided by a council of elders. Secret and solitary prayer was practised by them all.

"At several points in the island," says Dr. McEwen, "there are glades and recesses which gave sheltered quiet for private devotion," and he adds that cells in sequestered spots for hidden prayer were features of Scotie religion. When Columba withdrew to the bushes of the island for evening prayer, his monks "crept after him with loving awe to admire the radiance of his prayerful face. If at night a spiritual vision reached him, he sounded the monastery bell, and they rose gladly to kneel beside him in the prayer-house."<sup>1</sup> The settlement was called a family, and his relations with his followers were those of a father with his children.

He foretold to his brethren the hour of his death. "At midnight, when the venerable Lord's Day begins, I shall go the way of the fathers, for already my Lord Jesus Christ deigns to invite me, and I shall journey to Him on His own invitation in the intermediate night." "When the monastery bell tolled at midnight he rose hastily and entered the church alone. His attendant

<sup>1</sup> A. R. McEwen, "History of the Church in Scotland," vol. i, pp. 52, 63.



and some other monks followed and found him lying before the altar. When they lifted him with lamentations, he opened his eyes with a happy smile, indicating by a movement of his hand his desire to give them a blessing, and then breathed out his soul.”<sup>1</sup>

In the year of St. Columba's death, missionaries from Rome landed on the southern shore of England. Our Saxon forefathers commanded that if a stranger came through the forest waste or fen which divided one settlement from another, he should blow his horn as he came, for if he stole through secretly any man might slay him. In the year A.D. 597 the monks sent by Pope Gregory the Great sounded the trumpet of Christian prayer in the Isle of Thanet. King Ethelbert received the missionaries respectfully and promised them his protection, though a year was to pass before he accepted their teaching. “The band of monks entered Canterbury,” writes J. R. Green, “bearing before them a silver cross with a picture of Christ, and singing in concert the strains of the litany of their Church. ‘Turn from this city, O Lord,’ they sang, ‘Thine anger and wrath, and turn it from Thy holy house, for we have sinned.’ And then in strange contrast came the jubilant cry of the older Hebrew worship, the cry which Gregory had wrested in prophetic earnestness from the name of the Yorkshire King in the Roman market-place: ‘Alleluia!’” When he heard that the King's name was Ælla, he had seized on the

<sup>1</sup> A. R. McEwen, “History of the Church in Scotland,” vol. i, p. 66.



word as of good omen. "Alleluia shall be sung there!"

Among the pupils of Iona, two names are held in highest honour, those of Oswald and Aidan. Oswald, King of Northumbria, found shelter in youth behind the walls of Columba's monastery, and returned to his realm "fortified by the faith of Christ." He was a missionary at heart, Aidan's friend and interpreter. His first and last recorded utterances were prayers. In the year 635 he won victory over the Welsh heathen Chief Cadwallon. The Northumbrian force, assembled near the Roman wall, set up the Cross as their standard. Oswald held it with his own hands till the hollow in which it was to stand was filled in by his soldiers; then, throwing himself on his knees, he cried to his army to pray to the living God. Cadwallon fell fighting on the "Heaven's Field." We are told that King Oswald, because of his constant habit of prayer and thanksgiving, was accustomed, wherever he sat, to hold his hands upturned on his knees. He perished at the battle of the Maserfeld (642). His dying words, a prayer for his soldiers, passed into a proverb. "'O Lord, have mercy on their souls,' said Oswald, falling to the ground."

Bishop Aidan was a man of warm devotional spirit and lovable character. Bede describes him as "a man of the utmost gentleness, piety, and moderation." His daily life at Lindisfarne was that of a monk following the rule of Iona. It was his habit to retire at times for devotional solitude to the chief islet of the Farne group, on

which, in Bede's time, "it was usual to point out the spot where he was wont to sit alone." When King Oswald invited him to a dinner, he would arrive with one or two of his brethren, and after they had taken a little refreshment, they made haste to retire for prayer or reading. "Aidan was a mighty saint," writes John Hill Burton, "and the places and things with which he was connected were gifted with miraculous virtues."<sup>1</sup> This historian twice calls him "the illustrious Aidan."

St. Chad, Bishop of Lichfield, one of Aidan's pupils, proved worthy of his early training at Holy Island. According to Bede, he sought occasion for prayer in the changes of weather. "If a high wind swept across the moors at Lastingham, or, we may add, around the little cathedral at Lichfield, he at once gave up his reading, and implored the Divine mercy for mankind. If it increased, he would shut his book and prostrate himself in prayer. If it rose to a storm, with rain or thunder and lightning, he would repair to the church, and give himself 'with a fixed mind' to prayer and the recitation of psalms, until the weather cleared up. If questioned about this, he would quote the Psalmist's words, 'The Lord thundered out of heaven,' and urge the duty of preparing by a serious repentance for that 'tremendous time when the heavens and earth should be on fire' and the Lord would come in the clouds."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "History of Scotland," vol. i, p. 270.

<sup>2</sup> W. Bright, "Chapters of Early English Church History," p. 231. St. Chad died in 672.

Roman customs as to the observance of Easter and the mode of tonsure superseded those of the Scotie Church which derived from Iona. After the Synod of Whitby (664) Colman, Bishop of Lindisfarne, departed into voluntary exile. The grandest figure connected with Holy Island was that of St. Cuthbert. Like Aidan, he made himself a hermitage on the Farne islets. Cuthbert accepted the Roman usage, and was brought back in old age to fill the see of Lindisfarne. "He entered Carlisle," writes J. R. Green, "at a moment when all Northumbria was waiting for news of a fresh campaign of Ecgrith's against the Britons in the north. . . . As Cuthbert bent over a Roman fountain which still stood unharmed amongst the ruins of Carlisle, the anxious bystanders thought they heard words of ill-omen falling from the old man's lips. 'Perhaps,' he seemed to murmur, 'at this very hour the peril of the fight is over and done.' 'Watch and pray,' he said when they questioned him on the morrow, 'watch and pray.'" In a few days more a solitary fugitive brought the news that the Picts had turned to bay as the English army entered Fife, and that Ecgrith and the flower of his nobles lay dead on the moorland of Nechtansmere (685).

Cuthbert returned to the society of his birds on the Farne hermitage. The prayer, "O be thou our help in trouble, for vain is the help of man" (Psalm lx. 11), is associated with his closing days. We quote the familiar narrative from Bishop Lightfoot's Durham sermons.

“We place ourselves in imagination twelve centuries ago. We are in a lonely, barren, storm-lashed island off the Northumbrian coast. Cuthbert, the saintly ascetic, has retired thither to his solitary cell—retired, as the event proved, to die. He is there alone with the seabirds, his cherished companions. For five days the storm prevents all communication with him. Then he is visited by a small company of his monks from Lindisfarne. The end is now at hand. Herefrid, the abbot, is admitted alone. He receives the last instructions of the saint. It is somewhere about midnight, the hour of prayer. The departing saint is strengthened for his long journey with the Communion of the body and blood of Christ. Then raising his hands to heaven ‘he sped forth his spirit’—these are Herefrid’s own words—‘into the joys of the heavenly Kingdom.’ Herefrid announced his departure to the brethren outside. They were singing the psalm appointed in due order for the service of that night, *Deus, repulisti nos*, ‘O God, Thou hast cast us out and scattered us abroad, O turn Thee unto us again; O be Thou our help in trouble, for vain is the help of man.’ One of the monks mounted the high ground above the cell and held up two lighted torches—one in either hand—the concerted signal; and the brothers in far-off Lindisfarne knew that their spiritual father was gone. They too at this very time were chanting the same psalm, *Deus, repulisti nos*. Thus the wail of the Israelites of old was flung across this lonely sea to and fro from island to island—the unpremeditated but



fit funeral dirge for him whose destiny in death was stranger than his destiny in life.”<sup>1</sup>

Bishop Browne, in his “Life of Boniface of Crediton,” “the Apostle of Germany,” gives many illustrations of requests for prayer in letters of the time.

“The early Anglo-Saxon practice of begging for prayers,” he says, “would appear to have come in large part from the sense of weakness in women, but it very soon became a feature in the letters of men. Ecburga, in a letter to Wynfrith about 716–720, begs him to set her on the rock of his prayers, and support her with his suffrages. Under another name, as Bugga, in a letter to ‘Boniface or Wynfrith,’ she ascribes her peace of mind to his prayers, and begs him to continue to offer prayers to God for her. . . . Daniel, Bishop of Winchester, finding himself seriously ill (he lived for twenty years after this), begs not Boniface only, but those who with him served Christ in the spirit, to pour forth prayer to the Lord for him.” Examples are given of arrangements made for mutual prayer between servants of Christ who were engaged in arduous toil. “We may fairly take it,” says Dr. Browne, “that Boniface and his companions and immediate successors played a leading part in the formation of confraternities, brotherhoods binding together monasteries in various parts of Europe in affectionate bonds for mutual prayer. The famous ‘Liber Vitæ’ of Durham and Lindisfarne contains in letters of gold and silver the

<sup>1</sup> “Leaders in the Northern Church,” pp. 78, 79. The story is recorded by Bede, who heard it from Herefrid himself.



names of Kings, dukes and other high personages for whom prayers and intercessions were to be made.”<sup>1</sup>

Alcuin, a son of Northumbria, one of the most eminent teachers and theologians of the Middle Ages, died at Tours as Whit-Sunday was dawning in the year 803. He became ill on the evening of Ascension Day, and for a week lost the power of speech. But on May 17 he spoke once more and chanted the antiphon, *O clavis David* (“O Key of David, and Sceptre of the House of Israel”). “On the night of his death, it was reported, Archbishop Joseph of Tours observed a globe of fire hovering over the monastery; and far away in Italy a hermit saw in a vision the soul of the dead Abbot borne to heaven by a company of saints who, like him, had died as deacons.”<sup>2</sup>

In the second half of the ninth century the English revered a prayerful King in Alfred the Great. J. R. Green describes him as “the first instance in the history of Christendom of the Christian king, of a ruler who put aside every personal aim or ambition to devote himself to the welfare of those whom he ruled.”

Asser mentions in his contemporary *Life of Alfred* that the King learned in youth the Daily Course—that is, the prayers, psalms, and lessons for the various hours of the day. “These were collected in one book, which, as we have ourselves seen, he constantly carried about with him everywhere in the fold of his cloak, for the sake of

<sup>1</sup> “Boniface of Crediton and his Companions,” pp. 314–324.

<sup>2</sup> “Alcuin: his Life and Work,” by C. J. B. Gaskoin, p. 132.

prayer amid all the passing events of this present life." Alfred "heard the divine offices daily, the Mass, and certain psalms and prayers. He observed the services of the hours by day and by night, and oftentimes was he wont, without the knowledge of his men, to go in the night-time to the churches for the sake of prayer."

## CHAPTER VI

### THE NORMAN AND ANGEVIN AGE

TENNYSON, in "Harold," puts these words into the lips of Edith :

" No help but prayer,  
A breath that fleets beyond this iron world,  
And touches Him that made it."

The eleventh century was an age of church building. We do not know how much private prayer, in our own time, lies behind the erection of the smallest place of worship, or the hiring of an East-End room for mission services. The Abbey of Edward the Confessor at Westminster represents the secret devotions of men and women in his generation and in the old time before them.

" Twelve hundred years and more  
Along the holy floor  
Pageants have pass'd, and tombs of mighty Kings  
Efface the humbler graves of Sebert's line." <sup>1</sup>

Kings and monks lead the procession, but the golden bowls full of incense carry the prayers of unnamed, unnumbered saints, and of many a quiet worker in that old London. Separated by a thousand years from the origins of Christianity, they knew that their faith was built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ as the chief corner-stone.

<sup>1</sup> " Westminster Abbey," by Matthew Arnold.

William the Conqueror made "a good peace" in the English land. "Strange touches of a humanity far in advance of his age," says J. R. Green, "contrasted with the general temper of his government. One of the strongest traits in his character was his aversion to shed blood by process of law; he formally abolished the punishment of death, and only a single execution stains the annals of his reign. An edict yet more honourable to him put an end to the slave trade which had till then been carried on at the port of Bristol. If he was stark to baron or rebel he was 'mild to them that loved God.'" The Conqueror passed away with words of prayer. Dean Church thus describes his deathbed: "At early dawn on the 9th of September, 1087, from the abbey of St. Gervais outside of Rouen, whither he had been carried to be out of the noise of the city, he heard the great bell of the cathedral sound. He asked what it meant, and he was told that the bell was going for prime in St. Mary's Church. 'Then the King raised his eyes to heaven, and, stretching out his arms, commended himself to his Lady, Mary the holy mother of God, that she by her holy intercession, would reconcile him to her dear Son, Christ; and he at once expired.' The physicians who had watched him all night, lying quiet without any sound of pain, were taken by surprise by the suddenness of his passing away, and 'became almost out of their mind.'"

William gave his confidence to two of the best ecclesiastics of the age, Lanfranc and Anselm. Both were of Italian birth. Among the tradi-

tions of the monastery of Bec in Normandy was the story that Lanfranc, before his conversion, was on his way to Rouen when he was spoiled by robbers and left bound to a tree, in a forest near the Rille. Night came on, and he tried to pray ; but he could remember nothing—Psalm or Office. “ Lord,” he cried, “ I have spent all this time and worn out body and mind in learning ; and now, when I ought to praise Thee, I know not how. Deliver me from this tribulation, and with Thy help I will so correct and frame my life that henceforth I may serve Thee.” Next morning some passers-by set him free. He asked his way to the humblest monastery in the neighbourhood, and was directed to Bec, where he afterwards became Prior.<sup>1</sup>

“ The Christolatry of Anselm,” says an English biographer, “ is of the noblest Catholic type, blended of the reverence due to God, the loyalty of a vassal to his feudal lord, the love that passeth the love of women, the ecstasy of the mystic. ‘ O my Saviour and my God,’ he cries, ‘ let it come ; let it come, I pray Thee, the hour when I may at length gladden mine eyes with the vision of what I now believe ; may apprehend what I now hope for and greet from afar ; may with my spirit embrace and kiss what now with my whole might I yearn after, and be altogether absorbed in the abyss of Thy love. But, meanwhile, bless, O my soul, my Saviour, and magnify His name, which is holy and full of the holiest ‘ delights.’ ”<sup>2</sup>

Here is another extract from those meditations

<sup>1</sup> Dean Church, “ Saint Anselm,” pp. 33, 34.

<sup>2</sup> J. M. Rigg, “ St. Anselm of Canterbury,” pp. 87, 88.



of Anselm which were inward prayers. "I have a word in secret with Thee, my Lord, King of Ages, Christ Jesus. In the boldness of love the work of Thy hands presumes to address Thee, enamoured of Thy fairness, and longing to hear Thy voice. O desired of my heart, how long shall I sustain Thine absence? How long shall I sigh after Thee, and mine eyes drop tears for Thee? . . . Thou hast given the honey its sweetness, and sweeter than honey art Thou. Thou hast given its healing to the oil and more healing than oil art Thou. Thou hast given all the spices their scents, and Thy scent, O Jesus, is above all spices sweet and grateful. Gold among the metals hast Thou fashioned in singular excellence of beauty and preciousness. And yet what is it in comparison of the priceless excellence of the Lord and the glory immeasurable on which the angels desire to gaze? Thy handiwork is in every stone that is precious and pleasant to the eyes, sardius, topaz, jasper, chrysolite, onyx, beryl, amethyst, sapphire, carbuncle, emerald. And yet how are they better than straw in comparison of Thee, O King, fair beyond measure and altogether fair? Thy workmanship is in living jewels and immortal, wherewith, O wise Master-builder, from the beginning of the world, Thou hast richly adorned Thy superethereal palace, to the glory of the Father."<sup>1</sup>

The monk Eadmer thus describes the death of Anselm of Canterbury: "The brethren were already chanting matins in the great church. One of those who watched our father took the

<sup>1</sup> J. M. Rigg, "St. Anselm of Canterbury," pp. 88, 89.

book of the Gospels and read aloud the history of the Passion which was to be read that day at Mass. When we came to the Lord's words, 'I appoint unto you a Kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me, that ye may eat and drink at My table,' he began to breathe more slowly, and we saw that he was passing ; so he was lifted from his bed and laid upon sackcloth sprinkled with ashes. And the whole family of his children being gathered around him, he slept in peace."

One of Anselm's contemporaries was Margaret, wife of Malcolm Canmore, King of Scotland. She was a daughter of Edmund Ironside, and a sister of Edgar Atheling, the dispossessed heir of the Saxon line in England, which had succumbed to the Danish invaders under Canute. Margaret and Malcolm were wedded at Dunfermline in 1068 or 1070. "Queen Margaret," says Dr. McEwen, "was a thorough Teuton. Her mother was a Bavarian princess, and she herself had been educated in England under the guidance of Lanfranc, archbishop of Canterbury, and the tutorship of Turgot, a Benedictine monk, who accompanied her to Scotland as her chaplain or father-confessor. . . . Although her religion bore the marks of her time, her piety was genuine and beautiful, showing a rare combination of womanly gentleness and independent strength. In her personal religion, as described by her father-confessor, earnest study of the Bible, close attention to Church rules, constant prayerfulness and an abstinence which threatened her health, were balanced by a tender care for the poor, diligence in the education of her own children,

and a genial concern for her household servants. . . . Her influence over her husband, who had a passionate temperament, illustrates her strength and independence. 'I confess,' writes Turgot, 'that I was astonished at the miracle of God's mercy, when I perceived in the King such a steady earnestness of devotion, and I wondered how it was that there could exist in the heart of a man living in the world such an entire sorrow for sin.' Malcolm seems almost to have revelled in his wife's goodness. He would take away her favourite books of devotion, and after having adorned them with jewels and gold, restore them to her as proof of his love. . . . Her last words—she died in great pain at the age of forty-six or forty-seven—were: 'Praise be to God, who has been pleased that by this suffering I should be cleansed from some of the stains of my sins. Lord Jesus Christ, who by Thy death hast given life unto the world, deliver me.'<sup>1</sup>

In the reigns of Henry I and Stephen a religious revival spread over England. It was the first of those movements, says J. R. Green, which the country was to experience afterwards in the preaching of the Friars, the Lollardism of Wycliffe, the Reformation, the Puritan enthusiasm, and the mission work of the Wesleys. "Everywhere in town and country men banded themselves together for prayer, hermits flocked to the woods, noble and churl welcomed the austere Cistercians, a reformed outshoot of the Benedictine order, as they spread over the moors and forests of the north." It was an age when churches and

<sup>1</sup> "The History of the Church in Scotland," pp. 155-157.

priories rose in town and country. "London took its full share in the great revival." Rahere, the minstrel of Henry, built St. Bartholomew's Priory at Smithfield, and rapid progress was made with the building of St. Paul's Cathedral. The Crusaders, amid their arduous warfare, were sustained by the thought of a praying Church at home. Montalembert says that when Philip Augustus, on his way to the Holy Land, was assailed in the Sicilian seas by a tempest, he reanimated the courage of the sailors by reminding them of the intercessors left behind. "It is midnight," he said to them; "it is the hour when the community of Clairvaux arise to sing matins. These holy monks never forget us, they go to pray for us, and their prayers will deliver us out of peril."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Monks of the West," vol. i, p. 35.

## CHAPTER VII

### ST. BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX

THE French revolutionary thinker, Georges Sorel, says in one of his later volumes that the Catholic Church will not renew its youth until it experiences a revival from within, guided by men who have been trained to the spiritual life in monastic institutions.<sup>1</sup> His words throw a backward light on the age of St. Bernard. In him we see combined the contemplative and the man of action. He is the world's chief example of the practical mystic, and he was taught in the school of prayer. At the age of nineteen, in a wayside church, "he lifted his hands to heaven, and poured forth his heart like water in the presence of his Lord."

At twenty-two he entered the monastery of Cîteaux. His appearance is thus described by Alan, Bishop of Auxerre: "There appeared in his flesh a certain grace, but spiritual rather than carnal; in his face a clearness shone forth, not of earth but of heaven; in his eyes rayed a certain angelic purity and dove-like simplicity; also the extreme delicacy of his skin showed the flush of modesty in his cheeks."

At twenty-four Bernard was appointed Abbot of Clairvaux, a daughter monastery of Cîteaux, and a new foundation. The monks suffered many

<sup>1</sup> "Les Illusions du Progrès," p. 329.



hardships during the first autumn and winter in their rude abode. Beech-nuts and roots were their chief support, and at last even salt failed them. Murmurings were heard. "Bernard argued and exhorted; he spoke to them of the fear and love of God, and strove to rouse their drooping spirits by dwelling on the hopes of eternal life and Divine recompense. Their sufferings made them deaf and indifferent to the abbot's words. They would not remain in this valley of bitterness, they would return to Citeaux. Bernard, seeing they had lost their trust in God, reproved them no more, but himself sought in earnest prayer for release from their difficulties. Presently a voice from heaven said, 'Arise, Bernard, thy prayer is granted thee.' Upon which the monks said, 'What didst thou ask of the Lord?' 'Wait and ye shall see, ye of little faith,' was the reply; and presently came a stranger, who gave the abbot ten livres."<sup>1</sup>

Like his Divine Master, St. Bernard lifted up his heart to God in the solitary hours of night. "After matins, in the deep darkness he would wander forth alone, and pray to God with all his strength that what he did, and what his brethren did, might be pleasing in His sight. Then, while shutting his eyes, still in prayer, his over-wrought mind saw in vision the surrounding country, even to the slopes of the neighbouring hills, filled with an innumerable multitude, of every rank and diversity of condition, so that the valley could not contain them."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> J. Cotter Morison, "Life of St. Bernard," pp. 30, 31.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

When visiting Paris on a preaching mission in 1125, Bernard was grieved because his first sermon seemed to be without effect. It was addressed to schoolmen who were accustomed to spend their time in discussing dialectical puzzles, and who had no taste for Bernard's doctrine of voluntary poverty assumed for Christ's sake. He returned sad at heart to the house of his host, and immediately fell to praying. "As he prayed with great vehemence, he was overcome by such a torrent of tears, accompanied by sobs and groans, that he was heard outside." On the second day a full harvest compensated for the previous sterility. As soon as the sermon was over, several of his hearers expressed their desire to become monks, and he took them back with him to Clairvaux.

In a letter of advice to the young Abbot Baldwin, Bernard has these salutary counsels :

"Take heed to give to your words the voice of power. What is that—do you ask? It is—that your works harmonise with your words, or rather your words with your works, that you be careful to *do* before you teach. It is a most beautiful and salutary order of things that you should first bear the burden you place on others, and learn from yourself how men should be ruled. Otherwise the lazy man will mock you, as that lazy one to whom it is labour to lift his hand to his mouth. . . . Understand, to the quieting of your conscience, that in these two commandments, i.e. of precept and example, the whole of your duty resides. You, however, if you be wise, will add yet a third, namely, a zeal for prayer to complete that treble repetition of

the Gospel concerning feeding the sheep. You will then know that no sacrament of that trinity is in any wise broken by you, if you feed them by word, by example, and by the fruit of holy prayers. Now abideth speech, example, prayer, these three ; but the greatest of these is prayer. For although, as it has been said, the strength of speech is work, yet prayer wins grace and efficacy for both work and speech."

About the time when his brother Gerard died, the abbot was lecturing on the Song of Solomon, and he performed his routine work as usual. He had maintained an outward calm at the funeral service, but from the third paragraph of the discourse his mind fastened with an agonising clutch on his personal sorrow. "What have I to do with this canticle, who am steeped in bitterness ?"

From many tender passages in the sermon, these words may be quoted : "God grant that I may not have lost thee, but only have sent thee before me. God grant that at some future time, even though remote, I may follow thee whithersoever thou art gone. For there is no doubt that thou art gone to those whom, towards the middle of thy last night upon earth, thou invitedst to join in praise, when, to the astonishment of all present, with a voice and countenance of exultation, thou didst break forth into that Psalm of David, 'Praise the Lord of heaven, praise him in the height. . . .' When, after the summons, I had reached his side, and he, with a clear voice, in my hearing, had finished the last words of the Psalm, looking up into heaven he said, 'Father,

into Thy hands I commend my spirit!’ and repeating the passage, he said again and again, ‘Father, Father!’”<sup>1</sup>

In the closing passage of this discourse St. Bernard recalled his beloved brother’s dangerous illness a year earlier at Viterbo, when both were absent from the monastery on the business of the Church. “I grieved to lose the companion of my wanderings, to leave him in a strange land. . . . Then, turning myself to prayer with tears and groans, ‘Wait,’ I said, ‘O Lord, until our return. After he has been restored to his friends Thou shalt take him if Thou wilt, and I will not complain.’ Thou heardest my prayer, O God. He grew strong again. We finished the work Thou gavest us to do; we returned with joy and gladness, bearing with us the sheaves of peace. And then I nearly forgot my agreement, but Thou didst not. . . . Thou hast sought again what was entrusted to us; Thou hast received Thine own.”<sup>2</sup>

In his counsels for the Christian life St. Bernard wrote: “Whosoever with prayer and diligent devotion is watchful towards the spiritual world, will depart hence safely, and be received into that world with great joy. Wherever therefore thou shalt be, pray secretly within thyself. If thou shalt be far from a house of prayer, give not thyself trouble to seek for one, for thou thyself art a sanctuary designed for prayer. If thou shalt be in bed, or in any other place, pray there; thy temple is there. By frequent prayer, by

<sup>1</sup> J. Cotter Morison, “Life of St. Bernard,” pp. 269, 270.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 272, 273.



bending the body in lowly devotion, the mind is exalted towards God. For as there is no moment in which man doth not experience and enjoy the goodness and mercy of God, so there ought to be no moment in which he ought not to have God present in his thoughts.”<sup>1</sup>

St. Bernard's last letter, addressed to Arnold of Chartres, Abbot of Bonneval, tells of his sufferings from insomnia. “I have received thy loving message with loving welcome, but not in the midst of delight. For what delight can there be when bitter suffering claimeth all for itself? Sleep hath left me. So that the kindness of unconsciousness never enableth pain to quit my senses. . . . And in all this—that nothing may be hidden from an anxious friend as to the state of his friend—as to the inward man, I may say that the spirit is willing though the flesh is weak. Pray to the Saviour, who willeth not the death of a sinner, that He will not put off my departure, now so seasonable, but will keep watch over me as I pass away.”

The last words of St. Bernard were addressed to the weeping multitude of the faithful who implored him not to leave them. Like the apostle, he confessed that he was in a strait betwixt two.<sup>2</sup> “Raising up his dove-like eyes, he said he wished that God's will might be done.”

In an Advent sermon Bernard makes the strange suggestion that the soul may intercede for the body at the bar of God :

<sup>1</sup> Translated by Rev. Horatio Grimley, M.A., “Saint Bernard” (Cambridge University Press, 1910).

<sup>2</sup> Philippians i. 23.



“Suffer the soul now to labour for itself, or rather join in that labour, since if thou sufferest with the soul ye shall also reign together. . . . For it will remember thee for good, if thou dost serve it well, and when it cometh to the Lord will remind Him of thee, speaking well of a good host and saying, When I Thy servant was paying the penalty of my sin in exile, a certain poor man, with whom I lodged, showed mercy upon me : oh, that my Lord would recompense him in my stead.”<sup>1</sup>

Dante assigns to St. Bernard a place of honour in Paradise. When Beatrice has withdrawn to her seat in the Rose of the Blessed, the poet sees as his new guide

“an old man

Clad in the vesture of the folk in glory.”

St. Bernard interprets to the pilgrim the meaning and mystery of the Rose.

<sup>1</sup> The passage, in the original Latin, is quoted by Dr. Jean Baruzi in “Saint Jean de la Croix” (1924), p. 407.

## CHAPTER VIII

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI—ST. DOMINIC—ST. LOUIS  
OF FRANCE

THE Medieval Church regarded St. Francis of Assisi as the man most conformed to the image of Jesus. He was one of the saints most loved by Dante. A Dominican, Thomas Aquinas, sings his praises in the "Paradiso." Francis and Dominic were, in Dante's view, "two Princes" ordained of God to guide the Church.

"The one was all seraphical in ardour,  
The other by his wisdom upon earth  
A splendour was of light cherubical."

Familiar incidents in the life of Francis—his marriage with the Lady Poverty, the presentation of his rule to successive Popes, his preaching before the Sultan of Egypt, and the "investiture" of the stigmata, are mentioned in the poem. Francis himself was pointed out to the pilgrim by Bernard among the redeemed multitude in the White Rose. His place was in the second rank of the Eternal Flower, immediately under that of John the Baptist, patron of Florence, and above those of Benedict and Augustine. There was room at that far height, amid visions and joys ineffable, for the servant of the lepers, the Little Poor One of Assisi, whose motto was that of St. Paul, "God forbid that I should glory save

in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." The life of St. Francis, which closed in 1226, at the age of forty-five, had made so profound an impression on contemporaries that he was canonised less than two years after death. From the dawning of spiritual experience prayer had been his chief concern. We trace his steps to that rocky cave concealed in the midst of olive trees near his native town, where he first implored mercy for the disorders of his youth. "Feverishly he sought for that higher truth to which he longed to dedicate himself, that pearl of great price of which the Gospel speaks, 'Everyone that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.' When he came out after hours of seclusion, the pallor of his countenance, the painful tension of his features told plainly enough of the intensity of his asking and the violence of his knocks."

We see him again absorbed in prayer before the poor altar of St. Damian, the chapel he loved best in the suburbs of Assisi. It was reached by a few minutes' walk over a stony path, almost trackless, under olive trees.

"One day," writes Paul Sabatier, "Francis was praying: 'Great and glorious God, and Thou, Lord Jesus, I pray ye, shed abroad your light in the darkness of my mind. . . . Be found of me, Lord, so that in all things I may act only in accordance with Thy holy will.' Thus he prayed in his heart, and behold, little by little it seemed to him that his gaze could not detach itself from that of Jesus; he felt something marvellous taking place in and around him. The sacred Victim

took on life, and in the outward silence he was aware of a voice which softly stole into the very depths of his heart, speaking to him an ineffable language. Jesus accepted his oblation. Jesus desired his labour, his life, all his being, and the heart of the poor solitary was already bathed in light and strength.”<sup>1</sup>

The words of the Lord’s Prayer were on the lips of Francis when he renounced all the possessions of earth, flinging down in a symbolic act at his father’s feet his clothing and the remnants of his money.

“Listen, all of you,” he said to the company assembled in the Bishop’s palace, “until this time I have called Pietro Bernardone my father, but now I desire to serve God. This is why I return to him this money, for which he has given himself so much trouble, as well as my clothing, and all that I have had from him, for from henceforth I desire to say nothing else than ‘*Our Father, who art in heaven.*’”<sup>2</sup>

To each of the friars who composed his early companionship, Francis said, “My brother, commit yourself to God with all your cares, and He will care for you.”

“The men of God departed, faithfully observing his instructions, and when they found a church or a cross they bowed in adoration, saying with devotion, ‘We adore Thee, O Christ, and we bless Thee here and in all churches in the whole world, for by Thy holy cross Thou hast ransomed the world.’”

St. Francis was sometimes tempted to with-

<sup>1</sup> “Life of St. Francis,” by Paul Sabatier, ch. iv.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

draw altogether into the contemplative life, though love brought him back to the service of humanity. He often retired to solitary places for prayer. Little hermitages, like the *Carceri* near his native town, are to be found wherever he wandered on his apostolic journeys. "Something of his soul may still be found in these caverns in the Apennine forests." He laid down rules for his brethren during their sojourn in hermitages. The author of that penetrating book, "The Mysticism of Saint Francis of Assisi," quotes these words of Thomas of Celano: "Francis often used to choose out solitary places that he might therein wholly direct his mind to God; but yet, when he saw that the time was favourable, he was not slothful in attending to business and in applying himself gladly to the salvation of his neighbours. For his safest haven was prayer; not prayer for one moment, not vacant or presumptuous prayer, but long-continued, full of devotion, calm and humble; if he began late he scarce ended with morning. Walking, sitting, eating and drinking, he was intent on prayer."<sup>1</sup>

In the *Fioretti*, which reflect the life of Francis, already half hidden in the mist of legend, we have a picture of his character as it appeared to the popular imagination nearly a hundred years after his death. One of the scenes represents him as praying in the deep of night. His friend Bernard had asked him to sup and spend the night in his house, and prepared a bed for Francis in his own room, where a lamp was always burning. "Fran-

<sup>1</sup> "The Mysticism of Saint Francis of Assisi," by D. H. S. Nicholson (1923), p. 142; and see also pp. 256-261.



cis, in order to conceal his sanctity, immediately on entering the room threw himself on the bed, and feigned to sleep; and Bernard likewise resolved to lie down, and began to snore loudly, as if in a very deep slumber. Thereupon St. Francis, believing that Bernard was really asleep, rose from the bed and betook himself to prayer; and raising his eyes and his hands to heaven with the greatest devotion and fervour, he said, 'My God, my God!' So saying, and shedding many tears, he remained until morning, continually repeating, 'My God, my God!' and nothing more. And this he said contemplating and admiring the excellency of the Divine Majesty, which deigned to stoop down to the world that was perishing, and to provide a remedy for the salvation of his soul, and through him—His poor little Francis—for the salvation of the souls of others."

Bernard, who saw by the light of the lamp these devout acts of Francis, was touched and inspired by the Holy Ghost to change his life. He became the first of the saint's companions.

When the desire to pray came to Francis in a company of people, he drew the sleeve of his habit over his face, and entered thus into fellowship with his Lord.

In the Rule of 1221 Francis exhorted his brethren to prayer. "Let us always have in ourselves a tabernacle and a home for Him who is the Lord God most mighty, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who says, 'Watch ye therefore and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy

to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.' ”

In his Letter to all Members of the Order, which dates from his closing year, this prayer is found :

“ God Almighty, eternal, righteous, and merciful, give to us poor wretches to do for Thy sake all that we know of Thy will, and to will always what pleases Thee, so that inwardly purified, enlightened, and kindled by the fire of the Holy Spirit we may follow in the footprints of Thy well-beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The Psalm recited by St. Francis on his death-bed was the 142nd : “ I cried unto the Lord with my voice ; with my voice unto the Lord did I make my supplication.” No Christian has ever been able to say more truly, “ Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living.” Amid the sufferings that preceded the end one of his companions suggested that he should have recourse to the Scriptures, remembering the consolation that he habitually drew from them. “ I need no more, my son,” was his solemn answer ; “ I know Christ, the poor man crucified.”<sup>1</sup> The last words that fell on his dying ears were those of the Gospel for Holy Thursday : “ Having loved His own that were in the world, He loved them unto the end.”

“ As he lay there,” writes Mr. G. K. Chesterton, “ we may be certain that his seared and blinded eyes saw nothing but their object and their origin. We may be sure that the soul, in its last

<sup>1</sup> “ The Mysticism of St. Francis of Assisi,” p. 343.

inconceivable isolation, was face to face with nothing less than God Incarnate and Christ Crucified. But for the men standing around him there must have been other thoughts mingling with these; and many memories must have gathered like ghosts in the twilight as that day wore on and that great darkness descended in which we all lost a friend.”<sup>1</sup>

St. Dominic, the second great religious figure of that age, was not less assiduous than Francis in the practice of solitary prayer.

“Witness after witness at the Process of Canonisation told of these night-watches of his as they had stumbled on him by chance or had overheard his prayers, for, fancying himself to be alone, his positive nature found it easier for him to pray vocally and with gestures, occasionally pausing in silence as though he were listening to another. Prayer for him was an energetic conversation with God, not a monologue. As these friars watched him through the gloom it seemed to them that opposite to the saint appeared the figure of Christ, the ‘book of the Crucified,’ in which, according to his own saying, he studied all his sermons. His flaming nature expressed itself in that passionate colloquy between himself and his friend: ‘At times he smiled and wept’; ‘He gazed straight in front of him, then lowered his eyes, muttered to himself, and beat his breast’; ‘He passed from reading to prayer, from the prayer of speech to the prayer of silence’; ‘Sometimes he would lovingly kiss

<sup>1</sup> “St. Francis of Assisi,” p. 168.

the book of the Gospels as though grateful to it for some sudden thought of joy, or he would cover his face with his hands, or pull his hood well over it so that he might shut out all distraction and sink more deeply into his thoughts of holiness.' ”

As he lay dying at Bologna, in the house of his Order, he thought of our Lord's high-priestly prayer in St. John xvii. “ ‘Father,’ said the prior to him, ‘you know how desolate and lonely we shall be. Remember us in prayer before the Lord.’ But already Dominic had begun his remembrance of them. ‘Holy Father, I have accomplished Thy will with joy. Those whom Thou gavest me have I kept. To Thee now that my care of them is failing I give them back again. Behold, I am coming to Thee, Father in Heaven.’ ”

He signed for the prayers for the dying to begin. “At the *Subvenite*, ‘Come to his help, ye holy ones of God ; come out to meet him, ye angels of God, taking his soul, and offering it in the sight of the Most High,’ Dominic repeated the sonorous phrases of that tremendous command over death, and lifting his feeble hands as though to join in their last appeal, opened his eyes, sighed slightly and was dead. It was six o'clock in the evening of Friday, August 6, 1221. The saint had hardly completed his fifty-first year.”<sup>1</sup>

Closely associated with the early Franciscans was Louis IX, who is known to the after-world

<sup>1</sup> “The Life of St. Dominic,” by Bede Jarrett, O.P., pp. 167, 168.



as St. Louis of France. Brother Salimbene, of the Franciscan Order, tells us in his Autobiography how he met King Louis at Sens in the year 1248. The monarch was on his way to the Crusade which had so disastrous an ending.

“Now the King was spare and slender, somewhat lean, and of a proper height, having the face of an angel, and a mien full of grace. And he came to our church, not in regal pomp, but in a pilgrim’s habit, with the staff and the scrip of his pilgrimage hanging at his neck, which was an excellent adornment of the shoulders of a king. And he came not on horseback, but on foot; and his blood-brethren, who were three Counts (whereof the eldest was named Robert, and the youngest Charles, who did afterwards many great deeds most worthy of praise), followed him in the same humble guise. . . . Nor did the King care for a train of nobles, but rather for the prayers and suffrages of the poor. . . . When he had come into our church, and had made a most devout genuflection, he prayed before the altar, and as he departed from the church, and was yet standing on the threshold, I was by his side.”

Salimbene followed the King to Urgeliac, “a noble town in Burgundy, where the body of the Magdalene was then thought to lie. At early dawn Louis was at prayer in the church. When he departed to go on his way, it was told him that his brother Charles still prayed fervently. The King was glad, and waited patiently without mounting his horse while his brother prayed. And the other two Counts, his brethren, stood



likewise waiting without. Now Charles was his youngest brother, who had the Queen's sister to wife; and oft-times he bowed his knee before the altar, which was in the church-aisle hard by the door. So I saw how earnestly Charles prayed, and how patiently the King waited without; and I was much edified, knowing the truth of that Scripture, 'A brother that is helped by his brother is like a strong city.'"<sup>1</sup>

As we watch the French King waiting, in the diamond-bright Burgundian morning, outside the little church, casting ever and anon a glance of tender affection at his young brother who kneels within, we are in contact with the deepest piety of the thirteenth century, an age of revival.

Israel Abrahams quotes an old Jewish rendering of Psalm lxxv. 2, "Unto God silence is prayer." An illustration from human intercourse of the Prayer of Silence, the mystical fellowship in which heart speaks to heart without need of utterance, may be found in "The Little Flowers of St. Francis." When Louis IX, King of France, was on pilgrimage, he desired greatly to visit Brother Giles, one of the earliest companions of Francis. He came to Perugia, where Giles was living, and asked to speak with him, not telling the porter who he was that asked.

"The porter therefore went to Brother Giles, and told him there was a pilgrim at the door asking for him; and God inspired him and

<sup>1</sup> "From St. Francis to Dante," by G. G. Coulton, pp. 142, 143.

revealed to him that it was the King of France : wherefore immediately, with great fervour of spirit, he came out of his cell, and ran to the door ; and without further questioning, and without even having seen each other before, with the greatest devotion, inclining themselves, they embraced and kissed one another, with as much familiarity as though for a long while they had been together in intimate friendship : but with all this neither one nor the other spoke. But they stood thus embracing each other, with this sign of the love of charity between them, in silence. And after they had stood thus a great space, without either speaking a word to the other, they departed from each other, and St. Louis went his way on his journey, and Brother Giles returned to his cell."

On learning the name of the visitor after the King was gone, the other brethren reproved Giles for his silence towards a pilgrim who had come so far, but Giles gave them this answer : " Beloved brother, wonder not at this, for neither could I speak a word to him, nor he to me ; because, as soon as we embraced each other, the light of wisdom revealed and manifested his heart to me, and mine to him : and thus by the Divine operation looking into each other's hearts we knew much better what I would have said to him and he would have said to me, than if we had spoken it with the mouth, and with more consolation than if we had gone about to explain with the voice that which we felt in our hearts. For from the defectiveness of human language, which cannot clearly express the

mysterious secrets of God, we should much more readily have discouraged than encouraged one another : and therefore know that the King took leave of me, marvellously contented and comforted in his soul."

## CHAPTER IX

### DANTE'S THOUGHTS ON PRAYER

LORD MACAULAY wrote of "those Collects which have soothed the griefs of forty generations of Christians." Lanoe Falconer refers, in one of her private letters, to "the exquisite conciseness and comprehensiveness" of the Collect for the Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity. It is an ancient prayer, found in the Missal as well as in the Prayer Book, and it sums up the longings of the soul of Dante.

"Grant, we beseech Thee, merciful Lord, to Thy faithful people pardon and peace, that they may be cleansed from all their sins, and serve Thee with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ our Lord."

No Christian ever leaned more firmly on the promise of our Lord, "If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it." Dante relies on the might of intercession; he gives examples of answered prayers, and at every stage of his pilgrim journey is in debt to the prayers of others. When he speaks from his inmost heart, we hear the accents of the penitential Psalms, and that sigh for peace which breathes through all the early liturgies.

Dean Church had the authority of the poet himself when he reminded Protestant readers

that the ascent of the Mount of Purgatory is a great parable of the Christian life on earth. "We understand the behaviour of those who are undergoing their figurative processes of purification. They labour as men do who feel the influence of the Spirit of God, striving with their evil tendencies, and lifting them up to purer and nobler things. We understand the aim and purpose which sustain them, the high-hearted courage which endures, the steady hope which knows that all is well."

(1) The first word of prayer uttered by the penitents on the lowest slopes of the Mount are those of the 51st Psalm: "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, according to Thy loving-kindness; according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions." Commentators have often been so thrilled by the music of the boat-song, "When Israel came out of Egypt," that they forget the fear, anxiety, possible exposure to temptation, which still beset the souls whom the Angel-Pilot has landed on the wild sea-bank. The heavenly steersman vanishes from their sight, as Mr. Greatheart left the pilgrims at the porter's lodge. The convoyance "officer," of whom Virgil speaks, hastens back across the waves to other duties, as Greatheart hurried back to his Lord, refusing the hospitality of the House Beautiful, though it was "dangerous travelling on these roads in the night."

The souls are troubled and bewildered as they face the grim ascent without their guide. Israel had Moses for her leader, but their pilot had departed. Like inexperienced climbers at the



foot of the Matterhorn, they hardly know which way to turn, yet soon each finds his appointed place. Manfred tells his story of gracious forgiveness in answer to prayer, a cry uttered after he had received two mortal wounds. "Dante taught," says Dean Plumptre, "as Latimer and Pusey did, that there was time for repentance between the uplifting of the headsman's axe and the fatal stroke."

More amazing still, as a triumph of Divine grace, is the story of Buonconte, who was also slain in battle. As he died he uttered the name of Mary, and folded his arms into a cross. Nature seemed leagued in that hour with the ghostly enemy, for a raging torrent swept his body into the Arno, "and loosed upon his breast the cross." Yet "one little tear" of true repentance has brought him into the company of pardoned sinners. Such as these are the penitents who sing the *Miserere* on the lower slopes of the Mount. As Carlyle says, "A soft breathing of penitence mounts higher and higher to the Throne of Mercy itself."

(2) Higher far, on the Terrace of Anger, we hear the music of the *Agnus Dei*. The penitents are singing the words, "O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us." As Dr. Carroll writes: "They know that only He who laid down life for their forgiveness can lift them up into the power of His own forgiving love."

(3) The Earthly Paradise at the top of the mountain is a place of rest and consolation. No drought can waste its life-giving streams or

wither a leaf of the forest which rustles in the breeze of heaven. In that Eden we hear the words of absolution from the 32nd Psalm : "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." Would not that be the poet's comfort when he came, six hundred years ago,—

"To the short day and the great sweep of shadow ;  
Ah me ! and to the whitening of the hills " ?

If the prayer for pardon belongs especially to Dante's "Second Kingdom," the prayer for peace runs through all three divisions of his poem like the murmur of that hidden brook by which the pilgrims ascended to the upper light. Paolo and Francesca, for whom he cherished a peculiar tenderness, say to him, while the wind is mute :

"If for a friend the King of all we owned,  
Our prayer to Him should for thy peace arise."

Dr. Pusey says that "the faintest longing to love is love," and it may be Dante thought that even in the *Inferno* the faintest longing to pray was prayer.

As a contrast we may quote the words of Cino da Pistoia in his poem addressed to Dante on the death of Beatrice :

"Also she asks alway of God our Lord  
To give thee peace according to His word."

Dante's longing for peace breaks out in his rendering of the words, "Thy kingdom come !" The souls on the Terrace of Pride repeat the Paternoster as they toil under their heavy

burdens, and the poet expands each petition. He paraphrases the second in three lines :

“ Come unto us the peace of Thy dominion,  
For unto it we cannot of ourselves,  
If it come not, with all our intellect.”

In the “*De Monarchia*” he expresses at greater length his passionate conviction that without peace there can be no triumph of the kingdom of God on earth.

“It is manifest,” he says, “that of all things that are ordered for our blessedness, peace universal is the best. And hence the word which sounded to the shepherds from above was not riches, nor pleasure, nor honour, nor length of life, nor health, nor strength, nor beauty—but peace. For the heavenly host said, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will.’ Therefore also, ‘Peace be with you,’ was the salutation of the Saviour of mankind. For it behoved Him who was the greatest of saviours to utter in His greeting the greatest of saving blessings.”

At the close of the “*Paradise*,” when Dante is about to return to this world, St. Bernard invoked on his behalf the highest spiritual graces. Bernard, while on earth, had instructed many in the life of prayer. To the Abbot Baldwin he wrote, “Now abideth speech, example, prayer; but the greatest of these is prayer. For although, as has been said, the strength of speech is work, yet prayer wins grace and efficacy for both work and speech.”

And again, St. Bernard wrote: “Whosoever with prayer and diligent devotion is watchful

towards the spiritual world will depart hence safely, and be received into that world with great joy."

St. Bernard becomes Dante's guide after Beatrice has resumed her seat in the Rose of the Blessed. In the solemn prayer of intercession addressed, according to his own devotional habit and the custom of his age, to the Virgin Mary, Bernard seeks for the child of earth committed to his care such gifts as may best be summed up in the words of the Shorter Catechism, "Assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end."

## CHAPTER X

### THE AGE OF CHAUCER AND WYCLIFFE

THE Guardian Angel of the fourteenth century is that Confessor, clad in robes of ashen hue, whom Dante saw at the Gate of Peter. We meet him in all the literature of a distracted and tortured age. Midway between 1300 and 1400 came the Black Death, the most fearful visitation of pestilence in modern annals. The plague swept away half the population of England. In some places the living hardly sufficed to bury the dead. Faithful priests like Chaucer's parson died in multitudes. Those whom the disease attacked at morning often expired before noon, and the doomed seldom lingered beyond the third day. "Look up to God," was the physician's word in the great London plague of 1665 as he discerned the deadly tokens, and the sufferers of 1349 drew near to the tribunal of Penance. In Dante's picture the gate was approached by three steps: the first of polished white marble, the second of dark purple stone, marked like a cross, the third of blood-red porphyry. "The triple stair," says Maria Rossetti, "stands revealed as candid Confession mirroring the whole man, mournful Contrition breaking the hard heart of the gazer on the Cross, Love all aflame offering up in Satisfaction the life-



blood of body, soul, and spirit: the adamantine threshold-seat as the priceless merits of Christ the Door, Christ the Rock, Christ the Sure Foundation and the precious Corner-Stone."

War and pestilence, civil insurrection, and the fall of dynasties; hunger, lack of employment, and compulsory servitude, were accepted by those who had entered into the true life of the Church as ministers of grace eternal. Their brief time on earth was a Good Friday, and their hearts were fixed on the Cross. If there is one text more than another which expresses their penitential devotion, it is that word of Psalm xlii. 3: "My tears have been my meat day and night." The verse is quoted near the end of "Piers Plowman." Travellers in Northumbria visit the fourteenth-century hermitage of Warkworth, above the Coquet river. We may quote the description by Mr. Anderson Graham in his standard work on the county. "Crossing by the ferry, a flight of steps, roughly cut out of the sandstone, leads into the rock-hewn retreat, which is entered by a little porch with stone seats. Above the entrance is a weather-beaten sculpture of the Crucifixion. Just inside, looking up, is the inscription: 'Fuerunt mihi lacrymæ meæ panis die ac nocte.'"<sup>1</sup>

Thomas Scrope, suffragan bishop of Norwich in the fifteenth century, was renowned for his sanctity and his zeal in preaching to the common people. He advised the earnest Christian to avoid solitude and "drawe to wyse and devout

<sup>1</sup> The hermit's name is unknown, but the traceried window belongs to the Plantagenet age.

companye when tempted." He insisted, however, on the "privy place from all maner noyse, and tyme of rest, without eny lettynge" for the practice of prayer. "Posture matters nothing but to free the senses—'Sytte ther or knele as ys most ese!' Whether it be the voice of the kindly old Carmelite friar or not that speaks," adds Dr. Owst, "here surely we catch the sighing of gentle winds, the rustle of trees, the silent passage of clouds above some hermit's cell."<sup>1</sup>

Langland believed that the prayers and penance of holy men were the most acceptable offerings to God.

"Preyers of a parfyt man and penance discret  
Ys the leveste labour that our Lord pleseth."

He attributed many of the disorders of his age to the decay of faith.

"So is pruyde enhansed  
In religion and al the reame, among ryche and poure,  
That preyerer han no power, these pestilences to let.<sup>2</sup>  
For God is def nowadayes, and deyneth nouht ous to huyr."

That was the saddest thought of all for poet and hermit, yet a vision was granted to them. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance and my God."

In no period was there a truer understanding and a more constant use of the Lord's Prayer. For proof we need look no farther than Chaucer's "Parson's Tale," where these words occur: "In the orisoun of the Pater-noster hath Jesu Christ

<sup>1</sup> "Preaching in Medieval England," p. 120.

<sup>2</sup> hinder.

enclosed most things. Certes, it is privileged of three thinges in his dignitee, for which it is more digne than any other prayere; for that Jesu Crist himself makid it; and it is short, for it sholde be coud (learned) the more lightly (easily), and for to withholden it the more esily in herte, and helpen himself the ofter with the orisoun; and for a man sholde be the lesse weary to seyen it, and for a man may not excusen him to lerne it, it is so short and so esy; and for it comprehendeth in itself alle gode prayeres."

The great Doctor of the fourteenth century, John Wycliffe, was a contemplative in the midst of action. "Wycliffe," says one of his best biographers, Dr. Robert Vaughan, "was truly a believing man—a man with whom the doctrines of the Bible were realities, and not fictions. He was, in consequence, a man of much prayer, of much converse with his Maker, gravely conscientious in his views of duty, and concerned, above everything, to be found doing the will of God in his generation, at whatever hazard, by reason of the ungodliness so widely dominant among the men about him."<sup>1</sup>

We may close this chapter with the story of two royal deathbeds. Dean Stanley describes the last hours of the Black Prince, the warrior-son of Edward III, who died after a slow and wasting illness in his forty-sixth year. The doors of the royal Palace at Westminster were thrown open, and he bade farewell to his faithful followers. "As the day wore away, a scene occurred which

<sup>1</sup> "John de Wycliffe, D.D. : a Monograph," p. 467.

showed how, even at that moment, the stern spirit of his father still lived on in his shattered frame. A Knight, Sir Richard Strong by name, who had offended him by the evil counsel he had given to the King, came in with the rest. Instantly the Prince broke out into a harsh rebuke, and told him to leave the room, and see his face no more. This burst of passion was too much for him—he sank into a fainting fit—the end was evidently near at hand; and the Bishop of Bangor, who was standing by the bedside of the dying man, struck perhaps by the scene which had just occurred, strongly exhorted him from the bottom of his heart to forgive all his enemies, and ask forgiveness of God and of men. The Prince replied, ‘I will.’ But the good Bishop was not so to be satisfied. Again he urged, ‘It sufficeth not to say only “I will,” but where you have power, you ought to declare it in words, and to ask pardon.’ Again and again the Prince doggedly answered ‘I will.’ The Bishop was deeply grieved, and in the belief of those times . . . he said, ‘An evil spirit holds his tongue—we must drive it away, or he will die in his sins.’ And so saying, he sprinkled holy water over the four corners of the room, and commanded the evil spirit to depart. The Prince *was* vexed by an evil spirit, though not in the sense in which the good Bishop meant it; he was vexed by the evil spirit of bitter revenge, which was the curse of those feudal times. . . . That evil spirit did depart, though not perhaps by the means then used to expel it; the Christian words of the good man had produced their effect, and in a moment



the Prince's whole look and manner was altered. He joined his hands, lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, 'I give Thee thanks, O Lord, for all Thy benefits, and with all the pains of my soul I humbly beseech Thy mercy to give me remission of those sins I have wickedly committed against Thee ; and of all mortal men whom, willing or ignorantly, I have offended, with all my heart I ask forgiveness.' With these words, which seem to have been the last effort of exhausted nature, he immediately expired."<sup>1</sup> On his tomb in Canterbury Cathedral his figure lies in full armour, his head resting on his helmet, his feet with the likeness of the spurs he won at Cressy, his hands joined as in that last prayer which he had offered up on his deathbed.

Henry V, the conqueror of Agincourt, died, like the victor of Cressy and Poitiers, as a humble penitent. Legends of the past are gathered up by Miss Yonge, in a passage from one of her best-known novels, "The Caged Lion."

"His tone, though low, was steady as ever, when he asked for the Penitential Psalms. Still they doubted whether he were following them, for his eyes closed, and his lips ceased to move, until, as they chanted the revival note of David's mournful penance—'O be favourable and gracious unto Sion ; build Thou the walls of Jerusalem' ;—at that much-loved word, the light of the blue eyes once more beamed out, and he spoke again. 'Jerusalem ! On the faith of a dying king, it was my earnest purpose to have composed matters here into peace and union, and

<sup>1</sup> "Historical Memorials of Canterbury," pp. 147, 148, 153.



so to have delivered Jerusalem. But the will of God be done, since He saw me unworthy.' Then his eyes closed again ; he slept or seemed to sleep ; and then a strange quivering came over the face, the lips moved again, and the words broke from them, 'Thou liest, foul spirit, thou liest !' but, as though the parting soul had gained the victory in that conflict, peace came down on the wasted features ; and with the very words of the Redeemer Himself, 'Into Thy hands I commend my spirit,' he did indeed fall asleep ; the mighty soul passed from the worn-out frame."

In 1415, the year in which Henry V gained the battle of Agincourt, John Hus, the Bohemian Reformer, suffered martyrdom at Constance. He has been rightly called "one of the truest-hearted of the sons of God." On the eve of St. John the Baptist, as he lay chained in prison, he wrote a letter to his friends in the city, near the close of which we find this prayer : "O loving Christ, draw me, a weakling, after Thyself ; for if Thou drawest me not, I cannot follow Thee. Grant me a brave spirit that it may be ready. If the flesh is weak, let Thy grace prevent, come in the middle, and follow ; for without Thee I can do nothing, and especially, for Thy sake I cannot go to a cruel death. Grant me a ready spirit, a fearless heart, a right faith, a firm hope, and a perfect love, that for Thy sake I may lay down my life with patience and joy."<sup>1</sup>

That prayer was abundantly answered. After

<sup>1</sup> "Letters of John Hus," with introductions and notes by Dr. Workman and R. Martin Pope, p. 253.

sentence had been formally passed on him in the Cathedral, in presence of the Emperor (July 6), Hus knelt down, and praying with a loud voice said : " Lord Jesus Christ, forgive all my enemies, I entreat You, because of Your great mercifulness. You know that they have falsely accused me, brought forth false witnesses against me, devised false articles against me. Forgive them because of Your immense mercifulness." The exhausting ceremony of the degradation and deconsecration from the priesthood followed, and finally the martyr was handed over to the bealdes of the city for execution. One who was present wrote : " When he had arrived at the place of torture he began, on bent knees with his arms extended and his eyes lifted to heaven, to recite psalms with great fervour, particularly, ' Have mercy on me, O God,' and ' In Thee, O Lord, do I put my trust.' He repeated the verse, ' Into Thy hands I commend my spirit,' and it was noticed by his friends that he prayed joyfully and with a beautiful countenance. . . . Rising from his prayers by order of the town official, Hus said with a loud and intelligible voice, so that he could be well heard by his disciples, ' Lord Jesus Christ, I will bear patiently and humbly this horrible, shameful, and cruel death for the sake of Thy Gospel and the preaching of Thy Word. . . .' When the lictors lighted the pile, the master first sang with a loud voice, ' Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on us,' and then again, ' Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on us.' When a third time he began singing, ' Who art born of the Virgin Mary,' the wind soon blew the flames

into his face ; then, still silently praying and moving his lips, he expired in the Lord.”<sup>1</sup> His age, according to the latest researches, was forty or a little over.

<sup>1</sup> “Life and Times of Master John Hus,” by Count Lützow, pp. 263-266.

## CHAPTER XI

### SEEKERS FOR THE NEW WORLD

WITH the exhaustion of the Crusading spirit Western Princes turned their thoughts towards maritime enterprise. Prince Henry of Portugal, whose mother Philippa was a daughter of John of Gaunt and a sister of King Henry IV of England, has been known in later ages as Henry the Navigator. As Governor of the Military Order of Jesus Christ, he sought to create a Christian dependency of Portugal on the shores of Western Africa. "His project," says a Cambridge historian, "was in substance similar to that carried out by the Teutonic Order in conquering and Christianising the heathen Prussians; and the Order of Christ corresponded in its function to the Orders of Santiago and Alcantara, which were actively engaged in ridding Spain of the Moors." Henry did not lead in person any of the slave-raiding African voyages, and the old chroniclers tell us of his pious rapture at the prospect of saving the souls of so many heathen. No conception of the wickedness of the slave-trade seems to have dawned upon him. He thought of himself in all simplicity as a patron of missions. Amid the corruption of an evil age he was renowned for personal goodness. "Brave as he was in heart and keen in mind," says a

biographer, "he had a passion for the doing of great things. Luxury and avarice never found lodgment within him. For from a youth he quite left off the use of wine, and more than this, as it was commonly reported, he passed all his days in unbroken chastity. He was so generous that no other uncrowned Prince in Europe had so noble a household, so large and splendid a school for the young nobles of his country. . . . A foul or indecent word was never heard to issue from his lips. To Holy Church, above all, he was most obedient, attending all its services, and in his own chapel causing them to be rendered as solemnly as in any Cathedral Church. All holy things he revered, and he delighted to show honour and do kindness to all the ministers of religion. Nearly one-half of the year was spent by him in fasting, and the hands of the poor never went out empty from his presence. His heart never knew fear except the fear of sin."<sup>1</sup>

It is assumed throughout the Bible that seafarers are praying men. The valour of these early sailors is not more remarkable than their devoutness. The author of Psalm cvii. describes the terrors of a storm at sea. "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; these see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep. For He commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is

<sup>1</sup> "Prince Henry the Navigator," by C. Raymond Beazley, pp. 306-307.



melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He bringeth them out of their distresses."

The most famous of discoverers, Christopher Columbus, was a man of profound and mystical piety. "Religion," says Washington Irving, "mingled with the whole course of his thoughts and actions, and shone forth in his most private and unstudied writings. Whenever he made any great discovery he celebrated it by solemn thanks to God. The voice of prayer and melody of praise rose from his ships when they first beheld the New World, and his first action on landing was to prostrate himself upon the earth and return thanksgivings. Every evening the *Salve Regina* and other vesper hymns were chanted by his crew, and Masses were performed in the beautiful groves bordering the wild shores of this heathen land. All his great enterprises were undertaken in the name of the Holy Trinity, and he partook of the Communion previous to embarkation . . . The religion thus deeply seated in his soul diffused a sober dignity and benign composure over his whole demeanour. His language was pure and guarded, and free from all imprecations, oaths, and other irreverent expressions."

Sir C. R. Markham also tells us that the character of Columbus was deeply tinged with religious enthusiasm and strong devotional feeling from his earliest youth. "When, probably at a much earlier age than is generally supposed, he became

possessed by his one grand idea, his religious feelings became entwined in every worldly thought, and he was impressed with the belief that he was a humble but specially selected instrument for the fulfilment of an Almighty design foretold in prophecy. He strove to keep these thoughts in his memory by day and night, and to bear them in mind, so that they might influence the transactions of each day. The Admiral's invariable signature is an indication of the way religious thoughts pervaded his life. It was an invocation to Jesus, Maria, and Joseph above the words 'bearing Christ,' and it is seen at the end of every document under his hand."<sup>1</sup> He believed that he was the chosen Christopher destined to bear Christ across the ocean.

Tennyson, in his poem "Columbus," shows a full understanding of the Admiral's prayerful habits. Like Saint Joan, Columbus heard voices and received guidance in dreams.

" And God  
Hath more than glimmer'd on me. O my lord,  
I swear to you I heard His voice between  
The thunders in the black Veragua nights,  
' O soul of little faith, slow to believe !  
Have I not been about thee from thy birth ?  
Given thee the keys of the great Ocean-sea ?  
Set thee in light till time shall be no more ?  
Is it I who have deceived thee or the world ?  
Endure ! thou hast done so well for men, that men  
Cry out against thee : was it otherwise  
With Mine own Son ? ' "

The old bedridden captain, despised by court and king, stays his heart on heavenly promises.

<sup>1</sup> " Life of Columbus," p. 295.

“ And more than once in days  
 Of doubt and cloud and storm, when drowning hope  
 Sank all but out of sight, I heard His voice,  
 ‘ Be not cast down. I lead thee by the hand,  
 Fear not.’ And I shall hear His voice again—  
 I know that He has led me all my life,  
 I am not yet too old to work His will—  
 His voice again.”

In the Instructions to the Fleet which were drawn up by Sebastian Cabot for the north-east voyage of 1553, the thirteenth clause was as follows :

“ Item, that morning and evening prayer, with other common services appointed by the King’s Majesty and laws of this Realm to be . . . read in every ship daily by the minister and the Admiral and (by) the Merchant, or some other person learned in other ships, and the Bible or Paraphrass to be read devoutly and Christianly to God’s honour, and for His Grace to be obtained by humble prayer of the Navigants accordingly.”<sup>1</sup>

Elizabethan seamen maintained the prayerful habits of the earliest discoverers. In the hour of his triumph at Cadiz in 1587 Francis Drake wrote to ask the prayers of the Martyrologist, John Foxe. “ To the right reverend godly learned father,” the letter runs, “ my very good friend, Mr. John Fox, preacher of the Word of God. Master Fox, whereas we have had of late such happy success against the Spaniards, I do assure myself you have faithfully remembered us in your good prayers, and therefore I have not forgotten briefly to make you a partaker thereof.”

<sup>1</sup> “ John and Sebastian Cabot,” by C. Raymond Beazley, p. 190.

“The veteran divine was dead as the words were penned,” says Drake’s biographer, “but such prayers we may well believe were breathed with his latest sighs. Drake then gives him a short account of the operations, and ends with a renewed request for his prayers ‘that we may have continual praise in Israel,’ and he signs himself, ‘Your loving friend and faithful son in Christ Jesus.’ Then comes the pious postscript, ‘Our enemies are many, but our Protector commandeth the whole world. Let us all pray continually, and our Lord Jesus will hear us in good time mercifully.’”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Julian S. Corbett, “Drake and the Tudor Navy,” vol. ii, p. 105.

## CHAPTER XII

### SAVONAROLA IN FLORENCE

“To teach religion,” said Carlyle, “the one thing needful is to find a man who has religion.” In Girolamo Savonarola, Prior of San Marco, Florence found such a teacher at the close of the Middle Ages. A Ferrarese by birth, he had entered the Dominican Order, and made his pulpit reputation at Brescia. Before that, he had been employed as an instructor of novices in the convent over which he was afterwards to preside. A witness said that he used to come to his classes with eyes bathed in tears, as one who had prepared his lectures by meditation rather than study. An English Jesuit biographer, Father Herbert Lucas, speaks of “his wonderful gift of prayer.” The convent of San Marco was under the patronage of the ruling House of Medici, and after his appointment as Prior, Savonarola acquired great influence in the social and intellectual aristocracy of the city. Among his disciples were Politian and Pico della Mirandola, both friends of Lorenzo de’ Medici. Lorenzo summoned Fra Girolamo to his deathbed at Careggi. The success of the friar’s preaching, as an English historian reminds us, was due to the moral superiority of Florence over other Italian capitals. “Florence was a sober, God-fearing



State after a somewhat comfortable, material fashion. There was much simplicity of life, a simplicity observed by travellers down to the eighteenth century. . . . Her art and literature at this period compare not unfavourably with those of modern days. Accusations, when pressed home, usually reduce themselves to the lewd carnival songs; but the *fêtes* of the city were altogether exceptional as a gross survival of medieval or pagan licence. Florentines, who were neither prudes nor prigs, looked with horror on the corruption of the Papal Court. . . . The vices of Florence were those of a rich, commercial city, extravagance in clothes and furniture, in funerals and weddings. Young bourgeois might think the brothel and the tavern the ante-chambers of gentility. Men of all classes gambled and swore. Dowries were high, and it was becoming difficult to marry. Yet in Florentine society there was a healthy consciousness that all this was wrong, and a predisposition in favour of any preacher who would say so.”<sup>1</sup>

His worst enemies could never charge Savonarola with inconsistency in his private life. He was in the truest sense a Bible Christian. “From the Bible he always took his start, and to it he always led his hearers back. This it is which gives the peculiar tone to the religion of the ‘Piagnoni,’ which carries the reader from the benches of San Marco to the Galloway hillside.”<sup>2</sup> The spiritual life of such a man must have been fed continually in secret prayer. The ejacula-

<sup>1</sup> E. Armstrong, “Cambridge Modern History,” vol. i, p. 150.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

tory prayers that broke forth in his sermons often sound like an echo from his private cell. From his letters we know that he attached a transcendent importance to the habit of devotion. Yet it was never possible for him to lead a self-centred religious life, and to concentrate his mind on the attainment of personal holiness. His strong and dominant nature craved for influence and leadership. The tragedy of his short career followed swiftly on those pulpit triumphs when he bowed the hearts of the multitude as he prophesied that Italy should be scourged and regenerated, and that these things should happen soon. In language of fiery invective he denounced the errors of the Church. He foretold the victories of Charles VIII of France, and declared him the instrument of God. After the French occupation of Florence (November 1494) had ended in a shameful treaty, Savonarola entered into politics. "He had striven as a Ferrarese, he said, to have nothing to do with the Florentine State ; but God had warned him that he must not shrink, for his mission was the creation of the spiritual life, and this must have a solid material edifice wherein to dwell." He supported, if he did not actually propose, the scheme for a popular government on the Venetian model, and for two years after its establishment his influence surpassed that of any other citizen. In George Eliot's novel, "*Romola*," we join the crowd of his hearers in the Duomo ; we are shaken, along with them, by his mighty prophetic word, and we see too how the foremost man in Italy became less true to his own authentic vision, until his

star entered those mists in which for a time it disappeared. "The mysteries of human character," says George Eliot, "have seldom been presented in a way more fitted to check the judgments of facile knowingness than in Girolamo Savonarola; but we can give him a reverence that needs no shutting of the eyes to fact, if we regard his life as a drama in which there were great inward modifications accompanying the outward changes. And up to this period, when his most direct action on political affairs had only just begun, it is probable that his imperious need of ascendancy had burned undiscernibly in the strong flame of his zeal for God and man. It was the fashion of old, when an ox was led out for sacrifice, to chalk the dark spots, and give the offering a false show of unblemished whiteness. Let us fling away the chalk, and boldly say, The victim is spotted, but it is not therefore in vain that his mighty heart is laid on the altar of men's highest hopes." George Eliot pictures Savonarola alone at prayer in an inner cell of his monastery. It was near the end of his career, and his mind was tortured with doubt about that Trial by Fire which was urged upon him by enemies and friends alike. His followers expected that this ordeal would evoke the long-expected miracle in which their master had taught them to believe.

"The high jet of light fell on only one more object that looked quite as common a monastic sight as the bare walls and hard pallet. It was but the back of a figure in the long white Dominican tunic and scapulary, kneeling with bowed

head before a crucifix. It might have been any ordinary Fra Girolamo, who had nothing worse to confess than thinking of wrong things when he was singing *in coro*, or feeling a spiteful joy when Fra Benedetto dropped the ink over his own miniatures in the breviary he was illuminating—who had no higher thought than that of climbing safely in Paradise by the narrow ladder of prayer, fasting, and obedience. But under this particular white tunic there was a heart beating with a consciousness inconceivable to the average monk, and perhaps hard to be conceived by any man who had not arrived at self-knowledge through a tumultuous inner life. . . . Savonarola was not only in the attitude of prayer, there were Latin words of prayer on his lips ; and yet he was not praying. He had entered his cell, had fallen on his knees, and burst into words of supplication, seeking in this way for an influx of calmness which would be a warrant to him that the resolutions urged on him by crowding thoughts and passions were not wresting him away from the Divine support ; but the previsions and impulses which had been at work within him for the last hour were too imperious ; and while he pressed his hands against his face, and while his lips were uttering audibly, ‘ *Cor mundum crea in me,* ’ his mind was still filled with the snare his enemies had prepared for him, was still busy with the arguments by which he could justify himself against their taunts and accusations.”<sup>1</sup>

One of the most beautiful of the Frate’s sermons had for its text the opening words of Psalm

<sup>1</sup> “ Romola,” ch. lxiv.



lxxxiv., "How lovely are Thy tabernacles (or tents), O Lord of Hosts." It was addressed to an audience of women. Taking up the language of the Canticles, he described the soul as engaged in an earnest search for the Beloved. "Perhaps He is to be found in the shepherd's tents. What are the tents of God? Surely His creatures, for in them He dwells. The soul, then, may be imagined as wandering through creation, lifting up, as she goes along, the flap or lappel of each tent, seeking if the Beloved be there. . . . Again, the Psalmist exclaims, 'The sparrow has found herself a house.' The mind of man, like a bird seeking where to build her nest, ranges over the world, seeking rest in philosophy, in literature, in science, and so forth, but in God alone can it find true repose. He is enough, let it seek no other. 'And the turtle a nest where it may lay its young.' So it is that the will of man seeks its object here, there, and everywhere, but in God alone can it find that which satisfies it." The steps by which the Hebrew pilgrim proposes to mount to the Divine sanctuary on Mount Sion are illustrated by the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer, while the blessings he hoped to receive were brought into relation with the blessings pronounced by God on the several stages of creation as recorded in Genesis i.

As with other sermons of Savonarola, prayers interrupted the discourse. His peroration was broken off by the sobs and cries of "Misericordia" which spontaneously burst from the entire crowd of hearers.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Girolamo Savonarola," by Father Herbert Lucas, p. 294.



“He was a martyr, yet not without tragic blame,” says a German historian, as he thinks of the sorrowful closing years of Melanchthon. To Fra Girolamo martyrdom came in all its literal agony, and with the fearful precedents of torture. Impartial biographers like Mr. Armstrong and Father Lucas have sought to excuse the wickedness of his enemies on various grounds. We are told that the employment of torture was in that age a regular part of judicial procedure, and that it had been used a short time earlier on the Medicean conspirators, among whom was the young and popular Lorenzo Tornabuoni, in whose veins ran the best blood of Florence. We are further reminded that Savonarola never protested against these horrors, but approved their use in certain cases. None the less, the story of his examination belongs to the darkest pages of ecclesiastical history, and none can read the ghastly details without a shudder. Worn out by austerities and mental conflicts, he was subjected to prolonged and excruciating sufferings which, as George Eliot says, must quickly have produced raving in a victim so sensitively organised. Men were not demons in those days, adds the novelist, yet nothing short of confession of guilt was held to justify release from torture.

A respite was granted, during which writing materials were allowed him. Father Lucas remarks on the closing days: “Shattered by the repeated tortures which he had undergone, his soul was yet strong in His strength who is the support of the downcast; and he had spent the weary days which elapsed between his second and his

third examination, days of solitary and rigorous confinement, in well-nigh uninterrupted prayer. His very beautiful meditations on the Psalms 'Miserere' (Ps. li.) and 'In te Domine speravi' (Ps. xxxi.), composed during his imprisonment, and the 'Rule of a Christian Life' which he drew up for the use of his gaoler, are a touching record of his thoughts and aspirations during that time of tribulation."

Botticelli's picture, "The Nativity of Christ," in the National Gallery, was the work of a reverent disciple of Savonarola. "To the elect," as modern critics believe, "Botticelli meant his picture to show the fulfilment of prophecy by the Second Advent of Christ, and the final triumph of Savonarola. The men embraced by angels are in this reading of the picture the 'witnesses' to whom the spirit of life was returned; they are welcomed back to earth by angels, ere they are rapt heavenward. They bear olive boughs, because in the Apocalypse olive trees are symbolical of the Lord's anointed ones. . . . The three figures crowned with myrtle represent the three risen and glorified martyrs,"<sup>1</sup> Savonarola and his two companion friars.

<sup>1</sup> Sir E. T. Cook's "Handbook to the National Gallery," vol. i, p. 500.

## CHAPTER XIII

### MARTIN LUTHER

THE student of history can hear, as he passes over the Enchanted Ground of the Renaissance period, "a solemn noise, as of one that was much concerned." "They went on and looked before them," says Bunyan; "and behold, they saw, as they thought, a man upon his knees, with hands and eyes lift up, and speaking, as they thought, earnestly to One that was above. They drew nigh, but could not tell what he said; so they went softly till he had done. When he had done, he got up and began to run towards the Celestial City."

Mr. Standfast had his prototype in many an honest burgher of the fifteenth century. Two examples may suffice from personal narratives. Frederick Myconius, who was born in 1491, relates how his father, a substantial townsman of Upper Franconia, instructed him in religion when he was a child. "My dear father," he says, "had taught me in my childhood the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the Creed, and constrained me to pray always. For, said he, 'Everything comes to us from God alone, and that *gratis*, free of cost, and He will lead us and rule us, if we will diligently pray to Him.'"<sup>1</sup>

George Schwartzerd, the devout father of

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by T. M. Lindsay, "History of the Reformation," vol. i, p. 124.

Melanchthon, was accustomed, as a regular practice, to rise at midnight for prayer. "There was a simple evangelical faith," as Dr. Lindsay says, "among pious medieval Christians, and their lives were fed upon the same Divine truths which lie at the basis of Reformation theology. . . . When medieval Christians knelt in prayer, stood to sing their Redeemer's praises, spoke as a dying man to dying men, or as a mother to the children about her knees, the words and thoughts that came were what Luther and Zwingli and Calvin wove into Reformation creeds, and expanded into that experimental theology which was characteristic of the Reformation."<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Lindsay tells of the prayer-circles within the Church which were so numerous in the decades preceding the Reformation. One of the best known was the "Brotherhood of the Eleven Thousand Virgins," established by a Carthusian monk of Cologne. It was familiarly known as *St. Ursula's Little Ship*.

"Frederick the Wise was one of its patrons, his secretary, Dr. Pfeffinger, was one of its supporters; it numbered its associates by the thousand. . . . No money dues were exacted from its members. The only duty exacted was to pray regularly, and to learn to better one's life through the power of prayer."<sup>2</sup>

The German reformers were born into a society of wakeful Christians. Luther's father, the toiling miner of Mansfeld, was found bending over his child's cradle in earnest supplication. From

<sup>1</sup> "History of the Reformation," vol. i, p. 126.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 145, 146.



his mother Martin learned the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments. St. Anna, the patroness of miners, and St. George, were his favourite saints. The service of the Mass in the Cathedral of Magdeburg, which he attended as a boy of fourteen, made a lasting impression on his memory. Dame Ursula Cotta of Eisenach took the boy into her house because her heart had been stirred by the earnestness with which he sang and prayed in church. When she heard him singing in the street for bread, this generous lady, wife of the richest merchant in the town, threw open her hospitable door and received him like a son. As a student at Erfurt University Luther began each day with prayer.<sup>1</sup> "Prayers hinder no work" was his motto.<sup>2</sup> From his lonely cell in the Augustinian monastery rose the sighing of a contrite heart. Tears were his meat day and night as he sought an answer to the question, "How shall I win for myself a gracious God?" At his first Mass he experienced torturing doubts. "When I came to the words 'Thee, most merciful Father,'" he said, "the thought that I had to speak to God without a mediator almost made me flee like another Judas." Luther once stated that the main object of his visit to Rome in 1510 was to make a general confession of his sins and to receive absolution. Melanchthon remembered that once in the midst of a theological conference Luther was so overwhelmed with mental distress and

<sup>1</sup> Adolf Hausrath in "Luthers Leben," vol. i, p. 15, quotes on this point the testimony of the Reformer's friend Mathesius.

<sup>2</sup> "Fleißig gebetet ist über die Hälfte studiert."



spiritual anxiety that he left the company, and going into the next room threw himself on the bed, where he repeated, amid sighs and tears, the words, "He hath concluded all under sin, that He might have mercy upon all."

The habit of prayer remained with him through life. He had not been many days at the Wartburg, whither he was taken by friendly hands after his heroic appearance at the Diet of Worms, when he wrote to Melanchthon, "See what is wrought by the Mighty One of Jacob, while we keep still, endure, and pray."<sup>1</sup> And again, "What are you doing all this time, my Philip? Are you not praying for me that this retreat, to which I have unwillingly consented, may bring forth something greater for God's glory? . . . You see your calling and your gifts. I pray earnestly for you, if my prayer (as I do not doubt) can accomplish anything. Do me the same kindness, and let us share that burden with each other. We alone still stand in the firing line; they will seek you after me."<sup>2</sup>

For an intimate account of Luther's private fellowship with his Heavenly Father we may turn to a letter of the young Veit Dietrich, who was the Reformer's companion at the Castle of Coburg in 1530, while the Diet of Augsburg was in session. As in every time of danger, Luther's courage was high and serene. The letter contains these words: "I cannot sufficiently admire the remarkable firmness, cheerfulness, faith, and hope of the man in these most bitter times. These he

<sup>1</sup> Enders, "Luthers Briefwechsel," vol. iii, p. 147.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.

nourishes steadily by more diligent meditation on God's Word. Not a day passes on which he does not devote at least three hours to prayer, and those the hours most suitable for study. Once I happened to hear him praying. Good God, what spirit, what faith there was in his words! He pleaded with such reverence as if he felt himself to be talking with God, with such hope and faith as if he were speaking with a father and a friend. 'I know,' he said, 'that Thou art our God and Father. I am sure, therefore, that Thou wilt defeat the persecutors of Thy children. If not, the danger is Thine as well as ours. The whole of this business is Thine; we have been compelled to meet it; defend us therefore.' I, standing apart, heard him praying with a clear voice in almost these very words. My soul also burned with a strange ardour as he spoke so familiarly, so solemnly, so reverently with God, and as he prayed he pleaded promises from the Psalms like one who was sure that all the things for which he asked would come to pass."<sup>1</sup>

A contemporary writer has preserved every detail of Luther's visit to Weimar in June 1540, when his prayers and personal influence brought Melanchthon from the gate of death. That month of June marked a critical period in the lives of both Reformers, for it was then that they suffered the worst consequences of their ill-fated "confessional counsel" to the Landgrave of Hesse on his marriage. Köstlin has truly said that the scene in Melanchthon's sick-room at Weimar

<sup>1</sup> Corpus Reformatorum, vol. ii, col. 159. The letter was written to Melanchthon.

was one of the most important incidents in the latter part of Luther's career. Hausrath says it is like the story of an awakening of the dead. In German Protestant circles, the restoration of the sick man was regarded at the time and long afterwards as a miraculous answer to prayer.

In his rough, picturesque phraseology Luther said to his friends: "Our Lord God could not but hear me; for I threw my sack before His door and rubbed His ears with all His promises of hearing prayers which I could repeat out of Holy Writ; so that He could not but hear me, if I were ever to trust in His promises."

"Then," says George Ellinger, Melanchthon's modern biographer, "he roused the sick man with words of comfort and exhortation, opposed his wish to die by telling him that he was still needed on earth for God's service, and compelled him by insistent pressure to take some food at once. Success followed. The body, it is clear, had only needed strengthening, and Melanchthon in his grief may have quite neglected to eat. But the chief thing was that the patient should be set free from crushing mental pressure and delivered from torment of soul. Luther accomplished this. By the force of his personality, the elemental might of his language, and the elevating religious influence that proceeded from him, he reawakened to life and activity a human heart which was breaking under self-reproaches and inward sufferings."<sup>1</sup> "A sublime moment," is Ellinger's comment on the scene. "If Luther

<sup>1</sup> "Philipp Melanchthon," by Georg Ellinger (1902), pp. 381, 382.

had not come to me," Melancthon wrote afterwards, "I should certainly have died."

Many passages on prayer are included in the Table Talk of Luther's closing years. I translate a few of these, which date from 1540 onwards.<sup>1</sup>

*On St. John xiv. 13*

"'Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.' Dear one, who really believes that our prayer is so acceptable! But let us pray, none the less, for weak faith is yet true faith, and must be heard, so that the Father shall do what we ask through the Son. For in Him we believe as in the co-equal God, though He was crucified in frail humanity. So we read that the man Jesus Christ is all in all, and like Paul (1 Cor. ii. 2) we know nothing save Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

*Importunity in Prayer*

"Prayer has hitherto preserved the Church, therefore we must go on praying. Christ says, Ask, seek, knock. First of all we must *ask*. When we begin to pray, He hides Himself somewhere and will not hear, will not let Himself be found. So next we must *seek* Him, that is, persevere in prayer. When we seek Him, He slips away into a little room; if we want to get in to Him we must knock at the door. At our first and second knockings, it seems He does not want to hear, but at last, when our noise is getting

<sup>1</sup> I have taken these passages from E. Kroker's edition of "Luthers Tischreden in der Mathesischen Sammlung" (Leipzig, 1903).



too much, He opens and says : ‘ What wishest thou ? ’ ‘ Lord, I want this thing or that.’ And he speaks again, ‘ Then have it ! ’ So we must wake Him up. . . . The saying, ‘ Ask, and it shall be given you ’ (Matt. vii. 7), simply means, ‘ Pray, call, cry aloud, seek, knock, beat loudly on the door.’ And that is what we must do always without ceasing.”<sup>1</sup>

### *Trustful Prayer*

“ We should commit all things to God,” said Luther ; “ He will do everything well. As He says in Isaiah xlv. 4, ‘ I have made, and I will bear ; yea, I will carry, and will deliver.’ ‘ Lay it on Me, dear one, just commit it all to Me ! ’ And St. Peter says in like manner, ‘ Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you.’<sup>2</sup> That is a fine and comforting word, as is this of the Psalmist : ‘ Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee.’<sup>3</sup> Yes, these are lovely, consoling sentences ! But we want to do everything ourselves, we must be the ones to lift up and lay down, and we forget our God the while. Do you say, ‘ Yes, I have commended it to Him, but He will not come ’ ? The answer is simply *Expecta Dominum*, Wait on the Lord.<sup>4</sup> We must wait and have patience, for He comes at last.”<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, No. 501, p. 254.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Peter v. 7. Would not Luther have rejoiced in Dr. Moffatt’s translation : “ Let all your anxieties fall upon Him, for His interest is in you ” ?

<sup>3</sup> Psalm lv. 23.

<sup>4</sup> Psalm xxvii. 14.

<sup>5</sup> *Op. cit.*, No. 603, p. 306.



*The Power of Prayer*

“No one can believe what power and efficacy there is in prayer, unless he has learned it by experience. It is a great thing when a soul feels a mighty need, and betakes itself to prayer. This I do know, that as often<sup>1</sup> as I have prayed earnestly—that is, with real pleading earnestness—I have certainly been heard in rich abundance, and have obtained more than I asked or sought. Our Lord has sometimes delayed, but yet at last He heard me.”<sup>1</sup>

*Intercessory Prayer*

When someone asked Luther whether the faith of one man can bring about the salvation of another, he replied, “Certainly! Indeed, the faith of one can procure the entire conversion of another. And so they say that Paul was converted and saved by the prayer of Stephen. But yet Paul was not accepted on account of Stephen’s faith, but the faith of Stephen won from God the gift of faith for Paul, and thereby his salvation. Many are kept alive to-day by prayer, as I prayed Philip back to life again.<sup>2</sup> Ah, yes, there’s much that prayer can do.” As an example of the Divine liberality in answering prayer, Luther quoted the case of Monica’s prayers for her son Augustine. She pleaded for his conversion, and there was long delay. “But when our Lord God came, He came indeed, and made such an Augus-

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, No. 646, p. 338.

<sup>2</sup> At Weimar in 1540.

tine that he now counts as a great light of the Church.”<sup>1</sup>

Prayer was not always easy for Luther amid the overwhelming practical business of his life at Wittenberg. “I have to drive myself to prayer every day,” he said, “and I am satisfied if when I lie down to rest, I can repeat the ten commandments, the Lord’s Prayer, and a text or two. Pondering over these I fall asleep.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, No. 617, p. 315.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, No. 584, p. 294

## CHAPTER XIV

### PHILIP MELANCHTHON

THE devotional life of the Reformation age, as it concerned the educated laity of Central Europe, may be studied from the letters and teachings of Melanchthon. At the opening of this chapter we may set these words of Michelet, "The man who more than any other carried out the thought of Luther, wrote books, founded schools, directed that movement which was a second Reformation quite as great as the other, was the illustrious Melanchthon, whom Bossuet regarded merely as a timid reformer, a cowardly heretic, who advanced and retreated. In reality, he took the most active part in the creation of a new Germany, born from his inspiration, animated by his mind, a Germany which ought to call herself the daughter of Melanchthon."<sup>1</sup>

Froude has written of Erasmus that "freedom was the breath of his life; if not the freedom of a master, then the freedom of a beggar. He was a wild bird, and would not sing in a cage." Melanchthon, on the contrary, was a caged bird. He had a much stricter sense of personal and civic obligation than Erasmus, and belonged all his life to the duty-bound classes. It was never his

<sup>1</sup> "Histoire de France," vol. x, p. 345.

fortune to travel outside the limits of Germany. "I have been here at Wittenberg for over forty years," he said near the close of his life, "and have never been certain that my post was secure for another week." An exaggerated statement, of course, but with truth behind it.

His youth was like that of Jeremy Taylor, of whom Bishop Rust said, "He had known of the state of childhood little more than its innocency and pleasantness." Born in 1497, in the little town of Bretten in the Palatinate, which must have carried then, as it does to-day, an air of smiling comfort and prosperity, he was fortunately placed in life. His mother, Barbara Reuter, was the daughter of the town mayor, a man of substance and education. Philip's father, George Schwartzerd, "the locksmith of Heidelberg," was one of the first armourers of his age, and was highly esteemed by the nobles and princes of Western Germany. He was, as we have seen, a man of devout piety and ascetic habits. With his parents, grandparents, brother and sisters, the future Reformer must have worshipped regularly in the old *Stiftskirche* of Bretten, which was divided in modern times between Protestants and Romanists. Within these walls he learned to sing the hymns of the Church. On his deathbed he recalled the services of Bretten, and dreamed that he was singing again the words of Passiontide, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." He cherished through life a true affection for his birthplace. One of the best-known of his ejacu-

latory prayers was uttered when, at the age of twenty-seven, he was travelling from Wittenberg for a short holiday with a party of friends. "He saw in the distance the clustering roofs of the little town where he was born. No spot of earth was so dear to him ; it had never seemed so dear before, and dismounting from the saddle, he knelt on the ground in a flush of devout joy." "Soil of my fatherland !" he cried. "How I thank Thee, Lord, that Thou hast allowed me to stand here once more !"

Although Melanchthon was never influenced by the scepticism so widely prevalent in the Renaissance age, we know very little of his inmost religious feelings until his experience had been enlarged, not only by association with Luther, but by the personal sorrows and disappointments of his years at Wittenberg. "His bright, Hellenic attitude to life," says Hausrath, "was suddenly changed by the influx of those dark religious problems with which Luther had surprised the world."

The young Professor, aged thirty-two, comes very close to us as he turns the leaves of his Psalter with trembling fingers after the death of his younger son George, a lovely and promising child who had not completed his second year. "At the time of my son's death," he wrote long afterwards, "these words, '*Ipse fecit nos, et non ipsi nos*' (It is He that hath made us and not we ourselves—Psalm c. 3), brought me wonderful comfort when they came suddenly before me as I was looking through the Psalter."

These references from Melanchthon's letters



can be paralleled from more than one passage in modern literature. The mood of humble devout resignation to the will of a higher Power is not limited to one century or to a single race. Mrs. Asquith (Lady Oxford) tells in her Autobiography that after the death of her sister Laura, the young wife of Alfred Lyttelton, she felt she must be out-of-doors from morning to night.

"One day I saw an old shepherd called Gowanlock coming up to me, holding my pony by the reins. I had never noticed that it had strayed away, and after thanking him I observed him looking at me quietly—he knew something of the rage and anguish that Laura's death had brought into my heart—and putting his hand on my shoulder he said: 'My child, there's no contending. Aye—aye,' shaking his beautiful old head, '*that is so*, there's no contending.'"

Edgar Wallace, in "People of the River," tells how Commissioner Sanders, visiting the Ochori City in West Africa, found Bosambo's people in mourning. "The chief waited his master's coming in the dark of his hut, and Sanders went in to see him. 'Bosambo,' he said soberly, 'this is bad hearing.' 'Lord,' moaned the chief, 'I wish I were dead—dead as my firstborn who lies in the hut of my wife.' He rocked to and fro in his grief, for Bosambo had the heart of a child, and in this little son, who had counted its existence by days, was centred all the ambition of his life. 'God be with you, Bosambo, my brother,' said Sanders gently, and laid his hand on the

black man's heaving shoulder ; ' these things are ordained from the beginning of time.' ' It is written,' whispered Bosambo between his sobs, and caught his lord's hand."

Melanchthon's modern biographer, George Ellinger, says that Philip's chief support amid trouble, grief, and care was the deep and sincere piety by which he was animated.

"Even the nature of his piety reflects his character. It is not the despairing cry of the God-seeking soul which is called forth by an agony of fear, nor is it a bold, heroic confidence. Although we do find certain echoes of the mood of Luther's hymn in the writings of Melanchthon, as for instance in his commentary on the Prophet Daniel, still we must recognise that in essentials his piety is characterised by softer traits. Inward surrender to the heavenly Father and to Christ, without any trace indeed of passionate enthusiasm, yet of such a kind that we can feel throughout it the deep longing of a truly religious, tender, and noble nature. In the second half of his life, especially, we notice a growth in him of this profoundly religious temper. In the prayers which we find occasionally in his letters, and in separate writings (especially in the third revision of his "*Loci Communes*") there is something which carries us beyond the sixteenth century. In such expressions we have already a feature of that subjective piety which grew up during the seventeenth century, and is distinctly recognisable in the hymns of the Church." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Philipp Melanchthon : ein Lebensbild," pp. 607, 608.

In a time of deep anxiety Melanchthon wrote : " If it were not for prayer I should scarcely be able to keep going at all."

Rising early while it was yet night, he brought spiritual food from afar. An English biographer writes thus of the Wittenberg professor's morning devotions : " When many excellent persons are in the mid-voyage of their dreams, at two, or perhaps at three, in the morning, it was Philip's regular habit to enter his study. The little lamp is in his hand : he is wrapped in the long *wand-rocke* of the time ; whatever besides can be done for his comfort may be trusted to that faithfullest of servants—the good John Koch. Then, with the old reverent habit he brought from his childhoods at Bretten, he turns his face eastwards—his thought spreading over the dark sleeping spaces towards Palestine, and he remembers, with devout prayer, how the Sun of righteousness arose, as the grey morning is rising, over those hills of dawn."<sup>1</sup>

In the year 1546, when the Turks were threatening Eastern Europe, Melanchthon wrote to a friend : " Every day as I say my morning prayers, and turn my mind and eyes towards the East, thinking of the lands where God revealed Himself and where His Son died for us, I seem to behold Hungary, whose ruins are a warning of what may happen to other kingdoms."<sup>2</sup>

During his last illness, at Eastertide, 1560, Melanchthon said to his colleagues, " I shall go out like a candle." A tertian fever was sapping

<sup>1</sup> " Philip Melanchthon," by the Rev. John Wilson, pp. 134, 135.

<sup>2</sup> " Corpus Reformatorum," vol. vi, col. 50.

his already enfeebled strength, but he persisted in carrying on his accustomed duties. On Good Friday he gave his last public lecture. On Easter Eve he communicated for the last time in the parish church, and he continued his correspondence as usual. He prayed that he might die in harness. "Let no one wish for me," he said, "that I should linger on until through old age and weakness I am no more able to be of service to others."

"On the following day he prayed earnestly (so that many heard him) that if he were no longer to be allowed to serve His Church and Christian youth, God would graciously take him away out of this sorrowful life. And later on he often repeated the same prayer, for he feared lest a slow fever might consume him, and keep him long an invalid. . . . God did in fact graciously grant his prayer."

In that tender and intimate story of the Preceptor's last days which was drawn up by his colleagues of Wittenberg University, we read of the final parting with Joachim Camerarius, his closest friend for thirty-seven years, who had come from Leipzig to visit him in his illness. Philip was lying on his bed when Joachim entered to take leave, and he spoke these words of farewell, "May the Son of God who sits at the right hand of the heavenly Father and has received gifts for men, preserve you and yours and all of us with one another; and give my affectionate greetings to your dear wife." When Camerarius returned four days later, his friend was dead, and the coffin was lying open in the

house. He could not bear to look on the beloved face in death, and waited outside till he was told that the coffin had been closed.

Melanchthon repeated on his deathbed the prayer of Erasmus, " Domine fac finem " (Lord, make an end).



## CHAPTER XV

### THE HUGUENOTS AND CALVIN

GEORGE FOX tells us in his "Journal" that as he approached the city of Lichfield in 1651 he was commanded by the Lord, of a sudden, to untie his shoes and put them off. Shepherds were keeping their sheep in a great field close by. "I stood still, for it was winter, and the word of the Lord was like a fire in me, so I put off my shoes and was commanded to give them to the shepherds." "Afterwards I came to understand," wrote Fox, "that in the Emperor Diocletian's time a thousand Christians were martyred in Lichfield, and so I must go in my stockings through the channel of their blood, and into the pool of their blood in the market-place, that I might raise up the memorial of the blood of those martyrs which had been shed above a thousand years before, and lay cold in their streets. So the sense of this blood was upon me, and I obeyed the word of the Lord."<sup>1</sup>

The command given to Moses and George Fox will be repeated for all who have studied the records of the early Huguenot martyrs. Miss Rossetti's "Martyrs' Song" might have been

<sup>1</sup> "Journal," edited by Norman Penney, F.S.A. (1924), p. 39.

written for them as for the Christians of pagan Rome.

“ We meet in joy, though we part in sorrow ;  
We part to-night, but we meet to-morrow.  
Be it flood or blood the path that’s trod.  
All the same it leads home to God.

“ God the Father give us grace  
To walk in the light of Jesus’ Face.  
God the Son give us a part  
In the hiding-place of Jesus’ Heart :  
God the Spirit so hold us up  
That we may drink of Jesus’ cup.”

Even the researches of modern learning scarcely allow us to catch an authentic word from the deep and awful darkness of the martyrs’ prisons, but we know that French executions for heresy in the sixteenth century were deliberately cruel and prolonged. We see a company of men and women passing through the streets of Lyons in 1553 as an escort to the five young men known as the scholars of Lausanne ; and we hear them reciting in clear tones the prayer of Hebrews xiii. 20 : “ Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will.” Or we turn to the Place de Grève in Paris seven years later, and listen to the dying prayer of that brave French gentleman, Anne du Bourg, “ Forsake me not, O Lord, lest I should forsake Thee.”

Wilfred Monod says truly that “ The golden book of the Huguenot martyrology belongs for evermore to the spiritual treasure of the universal Church ; the testimony of the soul and the

presence of God are there revealed in splendour. The legends of the saints are often very dull in comparison with these dazzling Gesta. How pathetic it is, that epic of Witness!" The martyrs of the Reformed faith "did not expect an early appearance of the Son of Man in the clouds to destroy Antichrist, and it was not in the name of Cæsar, but in the name of the Crucified that they were tortured to death amid the plaudits of a Christian clergy."<sup>1</sup>

In a household like that of Admiral Coligny, hours of prayer were observed as strictly as in the primitive Church. We have the testimony on this point of Francis Hotman, who knew the Admiral intimately, and visited him in his home. From the brief biography now generally ascribed to Hotman, which appeared three years after Coligny's death, we take this passage: "As soon as he had risen from bed, which was always at an early hour, he put on his gown, and falling on his knees made prayer and invocation to God on behalf of the whole company. And when the rest had kneeled down after his example, prayer was made in the manner usual in the churches in France." At table grace was said before and after meat. Family worship was held immediately after supper, all the servants attending. Coligny wrote on a tablet and posted up a form of prayer to be used in his court of justice in Paris before business opened.

Friedrich Heiler says that the prayer-spirit of

<sup>1</sup> "Le Christianisme Social" (May-June 1926, p. 524).

Calvin in its creative individual essence differs markedly from that of Luther.

"The childlike simplicity of a loving heart expresses itself in Luther's prayer. The prayer of Calvin is the utterance of virile earnestness, and an austere penitential frame of mind. From Luther's prayer there flows a joyful religious confidence with full self-surrender to God, while that of Calvin discloses a courageous, sacrificial, moral energy which has power to renew the world. In Luther's prayer the stressful longing, the hot passion of the heart, find full release in words. In Calvin's prayer the ardour of religious emotion is controlled by a reverent realisation of the unapproachable majesty of a holy God. Luther's prayer is the naïve expression of the trouble that rests on heart and conscience, a fervent petition for comfort, help, and grace. Calvin's prayer moves within the orbit of that great purpose of redemption, the Divine glory. 'We pray to the glory of God' (*in gloriam Dei petimus*). 'We ask first for that which will serve His glory alone, and afterwards what is for our own weal.' The pure and strong prayer-spirit of Calvin, which in grandeur rises above the childlike piety of Luther's prayer, though far inferior to it in intimate fellowship with God, lives again in the Baptist preacher John Bunyan, England's greatest religious genius, and in Blaise Pascal, that solitary, devout explorer of spiritual things, who defied all the doubts of the intellect with the answer of his mighty faith in God."<sup>1</sup>

Calvin believed in the observance of stated

<sup>1</sup> "Das Gebet," pp. 245-246.



hours for daily prayer, not as a legal duty or an act of moral value, but as "a discipline for our weakness, which in this way is exercised and then stimulated." "Prayer is ordained to this end," he said, "that we should confess our needs to God, and make our complaint to Him, as children lay their troubles in full confidence before their parents." His prayers are sometimes expressed almost in the language of the ancient Scriptures: "O Lord, Thou art our Father, and we are but mire of the earth; Thou art our Creator, and we are the work of Thy hands; Thou art our Shepherd, we are Thy flock; Thou art our Redeemer, we are Thy people whom Thou hast purchased; Thou art our God, we are Thine heritage. Be not wroth with us therefore, nor punish us in Thy displeasure."<sup>1</sup>

There are two parts in prayer, he taught, petition and thanksgiving. Before we offer any prayer for ourselves we must ask that God's will may be done. The four rules or laws were recollection, fervour, humility, and trust in God.

Calvin has told us that when his beloved wife Idelette was dying,<sup>2</sup> she used these words: "O glorious resurrection! God of Abraham, and of all our fathers, during those many ages that the faithful have hoped in Thee, not one has been deceived. I also will hope in Thee."<sup>3</sup>

He does not seem to have been actually in the room at the moment of death. He had been called out of the house at 6 a.m., and on returning an hour later, found that the sufferer had already

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Heiler, *op. cit.*, p. 376.

<sup>2</sup> In March 1549.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by E. Doumergue, "Jean Calvin," vol. ii, p. 475.



lost the power of speech. After addressing to her words of tender consolation, he left her bedside to pray in solitude (*Abdidi me ad precandum*). Idelette "listened calmly to the petitions offered, and was attentive to exhortation (*ad doctrinam*). Before eight o'clock she passed away so peacefully that those who were present could scarcely tell whether she were alive or dead."

Calvin's words on the prayer of Hannah, mother of Samuel, allow us a glimpse of his own habits in private devotion.

"All the faithful (*sancti omnes*)," he says, "experience daily the same thing in themselves, when, in their prayers, they utter unpremeditated words and sighs." M. Doumergue, the Reformer's learned biographer, adds, "We must assume that when Calvin speaks of 'all the faithful,' he does not exclude himself from their number. We must therefore picture him as pouring forth 'words and sighs' with gestures while he was on his knees in prayer; for kneeling was with him a habit."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> E. Doumergue, "Jean Calvin," vol. iv (1910), p. 338.

## CHAPTER XVI

### JOHN KNOX

PROFESSOR HUME BROWN declares that the religion of John Knox was "something 'savage and bare, but infinitely strong.' It was the religion of St. Columba, who rushed knee-deep into the sea after a sacrilegious robber, pursuing him with curses; of St. Bernard, who believed that the slaying of an infidel was a service to God; of a religious leader of our own time [Cardinal Newman] who said that a heresiarch should meet with no mercy, 'as if he were embodied evil. . . .' But there was indubitably in Knox a soul of yearning that made human affection a necessity of his nature. *Rien n'est tendre comme l'homme austère*; and the essential tenderness of Knox is vouched by the love of women, by abiding friendships, by the idolatrous regard of those who, like Richard Bannatyne, went in and out with him in intimate contact of mind with mind and soul with soul."<sup>1</sup>

As Dr. Stalker reminds us in his book on Knox, there is a disappointing lack of information with regard to the private and spiritual life of the Scottish Reformer during long periods of his career. His sufferings on board the French galley "Nostre Dame" (1547-8) may have initiated him

<sup>1</sup> "John Knox : a Biography," vol. ii, pp. 293, 296.

into the secret life of prayer. "In 'A Declaration of the True Nature and Object of Prayer'—one of the tenderest things he ever wrote—he observes: 'Trouble and fear are very spurs to prayer; for when man, compassed about with vehement calamities and vexed with continual solicitude, having by help of man no hope of deliverance, with sore oppressed and punished heart, fearing also greater punishment to follow, from the deep pit of tribulation do call to God for comfort and help, such prayer ascendeth to God's presence and returneth not in vain. For I, the writer hereof (let this be said to the laud and praise of God alone) in anguish of mind and vehement tribulation and affliction called to the Lord, when not only the ungodly but even my faithful brethren, yea, and my own self, judged my case to be irremediable. And yet in my greatest calamity, and when my pains were most cruel, would His eternal wisdom that my hands should write far contrary to the judgment of carnal reason, which His mercy hath proved true, blessed be His name! And therefore dare I be bold, in the verity of God's Word, to promise that notwithstanding the vehemency of trouble, the long continuance thereof, the desperation of all men, the fearfulness, danger, dolour and anguish of our own hearts, if we call constantly to God, then beyond expectation of all men, He shall deliver!' although he adds, with touching brevity, a little later, 'How hard this battle is, no man knoweth but he who in himself hath suffered trial.'"

The most pathetic written prayer of Knox is

contained in his "Answer to a Letter of James Tyrie, a Scottish Jesuit," composed the year in which he died. Dr. Stalker quotes it in full, as expressing the habitual attitude of his spirit to God all through his life :

"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit, and put an end at Thy good pleasure to this my miserable life ; for justice and truth are not to be found among the sons of men.

"John Knox with deliberate mind to his God.

"Be merciful unto me, O Lord, and call not into judgment my manifold sins, and chiefly those of which the world is not able to accuse me. In youth, mid-age, and now after many battles, I find nothing in me but vanity and corruption. For in quietness I am negligent, in trouble impatient, tending to desperation, and in the mean state I am so carried away with vain fantasies that, alas ! O Lord, they withdraw me from the presence of Thy Majesty. Pride and ambition assault me on the one part, covetousness and malice trouble me on the other ; briefly, O Lord, the affections of the flesh do almost suppress the operations of Thy Spirit. I take Thee, O Lord, who only knowest the secrets of hearts, to record, that in none of the foresaid I do delight ; but that with them am I troubled, and that sore against the desire of my inward man, which sobs for my corruption, and would repose in Thy mercy alone ; to the which I claim, and that in the promise that Thou hast made to all penitent sinners, of whose number I profess myself to be one, in the obedience and death of my only Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom by Thy

mere grace I doubt not myself to be elected to eternal salvation, whereof Thou hast given unto me, O Lord, most wretched and unthankful creature, most assured signs. For, being drowned in ignorance, Thou hast given unto me knowledge above the common sort of my brethren; my tongue hast Thou used to set forth Thy glory, to oppugn idolatry, error, and false doctrine. Thou hast compelled me to forspeak as well deliverance to the afflicted as destruction to certain disobedient; the performance whereof not I alone, but the very blind world has already seen. But above all, O Lord, Thou, by the power of Thy Holy Spirit, hast sealed into my heart remission of sins, which I acknowledge and confess myself to have received by the precious blood of Jesus Christ once shed; by whose perfect obedience, I am assured, my manifold rebellions are defaced, my grievous sins purged, and my soul made the tabernacle of Thy Godly Majesty; Thou, O Father of mercies, Thy Son our Lord Jesus my only Saviour, Mediator, and Advocate, and Thy Holy Spirit, remaining in the same by true faith; which is the only victory that overcometh the world. To thee, therefore, O Lord, I commend my spirit; for I thirst to be resolved from this body of sin, and am assured that I shall rise again in glory, howsoever it be that the wicked for a time shall tread me and others Thy servants under their feet. Be merciful, O Lord, unto the Kirk within this realm; continue with it the light of Thy evangel; augment the number of true preachers; and let Thy merciful providence look upon my desolate bedfellow, the fruit of her



bosom, and my two dear children, Nathaniel and Eleazar. Now, Lord, put an end to my miseries.”

A. Taylor Innes, in his short biography, has a helpful chapter on the inner life of Knox, as disclosed in correspondence with his women friends. The letters to his mother-in-law, Mrs. Bowes, reveal a strong and tender heart. To her he speaks of past religious intercourse with the family at Norham. “The exposition of your troubles, and acknowledging of your infirmity,” he says, “were first unto me a very mirror and glass wherein I beheld myself so rightly painted forth that nothing could be more evident to my own eyes. And then the searching of the Scriptures for God’s sweet promises, and for His mercies freely given unto miserable offenders—for His nature delighteth to show mercy where most misery reigneth—the collection and applying of God’s mercies, I say, were unto me as the breaking and handling with my own hands of the most sweet and delectable unguents, whereof I could not but receive some comfort by their natural sweet odours.”

“The sympathy that flows through this beautiful passage,” adds Dr. Taylor Innes, “comes out very strongly in another written in bodily illness. His importunate correspondent had proposed to call for him that very day. Knox suggests to-morrow instead. ‘This day ye know to be the day of my study and prayer unto God; yet if your trouble be intolerable, or if ye think my presence may release your pain, do as the Spirit shall move you, for you know that I will be offended with nothing that you do in God’s name.

And O, how glad I would be to feed the hungry and give medicine to the sick.' ”

He exhorts the Lady of Norham elsewhere to be “fervent in reading, fervent in prayer, and merciful to the poor, according to your power, and God shall put an end to all dolours.”

The letters of the Reformer are accepted by modern biographers as affording clear proof of the existence, “under that breastplate of hammered iron with which Knox confronted all outward opposition, of a private and personal life—a life inward, secret, and deep, and a life also rich, tender, and eminently sympathetic.”<sup>1</sup>

Knox died on November 24, 1572, “not so much oppressed with years,” says Thomas McCrie, “as worn out and exhausted by his extraordinary labours of body and anxieties of mind.” “Upon Friday the 21st, he desired Richard Bannatyne to order his coffin to be made. During that day, he was much engaged in meditation and prayer. These words were often in his mouth: ‘Come, Lord Jesus, Sweet Jesus, into Thy hands I commend my spirit. Be merciful, Lord, to Thy Church which Thou hast redeemed. Give peace to this afflicted commonwealth. Raise up faithful pastors who will take the charge of Thy Church. Grant us, Lord, the perfect hatred of sin, both by the evidences of Thy wrath and mercy.’ In the midst of his meditations, he would often address those who stood by in such sentences as these: ‘O serve the Lord in fear, and death shall not be terrible to you. Nay, blessed shall death be to those who have

<sup>1</sup> A. Taylor-Innes, “John Knox,” p. 64.

felt the power of the death of the only begotten Son of God.' ” His meditations in the closing week dwelt on the resurrection of Christ : “ Many times he had prayed that he might end his ministry by preaching on that doctrine.”

“ On Sabbath 23rd, during the afternoon sermon, he, after lying a considerable time quiet, suddenly exclaimed, ‘ If any be present, let them come and see the work of God ! ’ Richard Bannatyne, thinking that his death was at hand, sent to the church for Johnston of Elphinston. When they came to his bedside, he burst out in these rapturous expressions : ‘ I have been these two last nights in meditation on the troubled state of the Church of God, the spouse of Jesus Christ, despised of the world, but precious in the sight of God. I have called to God for her, and have committed her to her head, Jesus Christ. I have fought against spiritual wickedness in heavenly things, and have prevailed. I have been in heaven and have possession. I have tasted of the heavenly joys, where presently I am.’ He then repeated the Lord’s Prayer, and Creed, interjecting some aspiration at the end of every petition and article.” His pious ejaculations in these last days “ were so numerous that those who waited on him could recollect only a part of them, for seldom was he silent, when they were not employed in reading or in prayer. His last conflict came from the temptation to believe that he had merited heaven by the faithful discharge of his ministry. ‘ But blessed be God,’ the dying lips murmured, ‘ who has enabled me to beat down and quench the fiery dart by suggesting to

me such passages of Scripture as these, *What hast thou that thou hast not received? By the grace of God I am what I am. Not I, but the grace of God in me.* Being thus vanquished, he left me. Wherefore I give thanks to my God through Jesus Christ, who was pleased to give me the victory; and I am persuaded that the tempter shall not again attack me, but within a short time, I shall, without any great bodily pain, or anguish of mind, exchange this mortal and miserable life for a blessed immortality through Jesus Christ.' "

## CHAPTER XVII

### ST. TERESA

THE Spanish essayist "Azorín" remarks that in the sixteenth century religion was man's true Fatherland, while in our own age spiritual unity has been broken. "The believer had in his faith a password which linked him with all other believers. He could travel over Spain, visit towns, and enter houses; he could hold intercourse on the high-roads with the most varied types of travellers. The believer never failed to recognise the believer. And thousands of temples—cathedrals, churches, sanctuaries, hermitages—were spiritual homes for the wanderer and the afflicted. In these places, filled with a living, fruitful spirituality, the soul found rest. In all regions the believer lived, so to speak, as in his own abode. High above the mountains, the plains, the rivers, the cities, there floated the same atmosphere of faith and hope which was breathed by all the citizens. And one sole longing pulsed in every heart: the longing for salvation at the last."<sup>1</sup> St. Teresa was a child of the ages of faith.

<sup>1</sup> "Una Hora de España," p. 118.



For the modern reader there is much that is dim and vague in her "Autobiography." One thing stands out with the clearness of sunlight: the debt she owed to an upbringing in the home of Christian parents. While her father provided for his children good books in the Spanish language, the young mother, who was taken from them when little over the age of thirty, had made the best use of her brief opportunities by teaching them to pray. Teresa's mind began to awaken to heavenly things when she was a child of six or seven, for she saw that her parents had their whole hearts set on virtue. Their piety did not lose itself in devotion to the Virgin and the saints, but flowed out in charity to the poor and oppressed. "God had much people in the Spain of that day," says Dr. Whyte, and his words are true of the household in Avila.

Looking back on her early life, Teresa remembered that from childhood she had loved to be alone in prayer. A picture of the meeting of Christ with the woman of Samaria at the well hung on the wall of her room at home, and she repeated the words of the Latin legend underneath: "Da mihi hanc aquam" ("Give me this water"), although ignorant of their meaning. "It is possible," says her chief English biographer, "that we owe her marvellous treatise on Prayer, in which with inimitable grace and delicacy she symbolises the mystic life under the form of water, to some lingering reminiscence of the image so familiar to her childhood."<sup>1</sup>

At the age of sixteen Teresa became for a time

<sup>1</sup> "Santa Teresa," by Mrs. Cunningham Graham, vol. i, p. 94.

an inmate of the Augustinian Convent of Santa Maria de Gracia, close to her father's home. "With all the ardour of her nature, the impressionable girl abandoned herself to the subtle atmosphere around her with its glimpses of infinite possibilities. 'If I saw one of the nuns shed tears when she prayed, or possess other virtues, I longed to be like her, for, as regards this, my heart was so hard that I could not shed a tear, even though I read the whole Passion through; this gave me pain.'"

It was four years later, after she had already chosen the nun's vocation in the Convent of the Encarnacion at Avila, that "the gift of tears" came to her during one of those long and severe illnesses which overshadowed her girlhood. She had gone for rest and change to her sister's country house, and there she studied "The Spiritual Alphabet," a book of religious instruction which an uncle had given her. "In those moments of hushed tranquillity when the soul seems to soar above all created worlds, she felt that she attained the *Prayer of Union*."

During an almost fatal illness, Teresa comforted herself with reading the story of the afflicted Job. "Very often I had these words of Job in my thoughts, and I used to repeat them: 'Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil also?' They seemed to give me strength." For three years, crippled and partly paralysed, she lay in the infirmary of her convent, thanking God when at last she could creep about the room on hands and knees. It was a time of growth, not only in habits of

devotion, but in practical goodness. "I never forgot that I must not say of others what I should not like to have been said of me. . . . It came to be understood that where I was, other people's reputations were safe."

Looking back on these years Teresa prayed, "Blessed be Thou, my Lord, for ever, because although I forsook Thee, Thou didst never forsake me so utterly that I did not return and rise again, since Thou didst always give me Thy hand."

"In Teresa's land and day," says Dr. Whyte, "a Religious House was the understood and universal refuge for any young woman who was in earnest about her duty to God and to her own soul. In those Houses such young women secluded themselves from all society, and gave themselves up to the care of the poor and the young. In the more strict and enclosed of those retreats the inmates never came out of doors at all, but wholly sequestered themselves up to a secret life of austerity and prayer. This was the ideal life led in those Houses for religious women."

In the Convent of the Encarnacion much social freedom was allowed. Visitors came and went, bringing with them the gossip of the town and district. Teresa was a universal favourite, and for many years she sought recreation, as others did, in the gay, worldly talk of friends and relatives who diverted her mind from the graver matters of religion. So it came about that she almost neglected private prayer, contenting herself with the regular duties of the choir. After the death of her father, Alonso de Cepeda, she

sought the counsel of a learned Dominican, who bade her on no account abandon secret prayer, since it could never be practised without profit. "I passed a most troublous life," says Teresa, "for prayer only made me realise my faults more. God called me on the one side, and on the other I followed the world. All the things of God gave me great happiness. The things of the world held me in bondage. It seems that I wished to reconcile two opposites, so inimical to each other as are the spiritual life with the satisfactions, pleasures, and recreations of the senses. Prayer was a heavy labour to me, because the spirit was slave rather than master; and so I was not able to shut myself up in my heart, which was the only way of proceeding I used in prayer, without shutting up at the same time a thousand vanities." "Thus I spent many years," she goes on, and wonders how she endured so much without passing over to the one side or the other. "Well I know that to forsake prayer utterly lay not within my hands, for He held me with His hands who willed to show me greater mercies." She confesses that many a lapse occurred through her failure to "cling to that strong pillar of prayer," and counsels her readers to take no account of moods which might hold them back from life's chief business, since no one ever sought the friendship of God who did not receive from Him an abundant reward.

Dr. Whyte has these words in his little book on the Carmelite nun: "The greatest and the best talent that God gives to any man or woman in this world is the talent of prayer.



And the best usury that any man or woman brings back to God when He comes to reckon with them at the end of this world is a life of prayer. And those servants best put their Lord's money to the exchangers who rise early and sit late, as long as they are in this world, ever finding out and ever following after better and better methods of prayer, and ever forming more secret, more steadfast, and more spiritually fruitful habits of prayer; till they literally pray without ceasing, and till they continually strike into new enterprises in prayer, and new achievements, and new enrichments. It was this that first drew me to Teresa. It was her singular originality in prayer and her complete captivity to prayer. It was the time she spent in prayer, and the refuge, and the peace, and the sanctification, and the power for carrying on hard and unrequited work that she all her life found in prayer. It was her fidelity and her utter surrender of herself to this first and last of all her religious duties, till it became more a delight, and, indeed, more an indulgence, than a duty. With Teresa it was prayer first, and prayer last, and prayer always."<sup>1</sup>

Teresa prayed when dying: "O my Lord, the hour I have so much longed for has surely come at last. The time has surely come that we shall see one another. My Lord and Saviour, it is surely time for me to be taken out of this banishment and be for ever with Thee. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise. Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take

<sup>1</sup> "Santa Teresa," pp. 18, 19.



not Thy Holy Spirit away from me. Create in me a clean heart, O God." "A broken and a contrite heart," was her continual cry till she died with these words of the 51st Psalm on her lips: "A broken and a contrite heart Thou wilt not despise."

## CHAPTER XVIII

### ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS

IN his speech at the Vatican some years ago, the King of Spain made reverent allusion to "our mystics, who spoke from the lips of men the words of angels." The greatest of Spanish mystics is Juan de Yepes, known to after ages as St. John of the Cross. Students are fortunate in possessing, from a learned French writer, Dr. Jean Baruzi, a recent commentary on the life and teachings of this saint.<sup>1</sup> He was born at Fontiveros in 1542. His father and his elder brother, Francisco, plied the weaver's humble craft, but that father, Gonzalo de Yepes, was descended from a noble house, and had prosperous relatives at Toledo and elsewhere. For some reason or other—possibly his marriage with a girl of the people, Catalina Alvarez,—Gonzalo had been disowned by his rich connections, and at his death there was no provision for wife or sons. The family removed to Medina del Campo, in that age a flourishing town, whose fairs rivalled those of Valladolid. As a boy in his native village, Juan had worked at several skilled trades, and the knowledge thus acquired may be traced in his writings. At Medina he came in contact with the life of luxury; "silk and gold, leather and porcelain, books, and all those treasures which

<sup>1</sup> "Saint Jean de la Croix et le Problème de l'Expérience Mystique" (Paris, Félix Alcan, 1924).

were sent to the fair of Medina from the towns of Spain, Italy, Flanders, France, and England." He saw them, but he might not touch them. A kind-hearted townsman, who was superintendent of a local hospital, gave the lad a post as ward-assistant, and allowed him to spend his leisure hours in acquiring the elements of knowledge at the Jesuit College under a really eminent teacher, Father Bonifacio. The poet who was afterwards to draw from Canticles pure images for the life of contemplation, had known, as Baruzi points out, some of the most cruel experiences of actual existence. Bitter poverty had been his lot from childhood, and in the hospital they set him to nurse patients sick with plague, smallpox, or yet more loathsome maladies. The boy of sixteen must have escaped very thankfully to the college, where Bonifacio, himself aged nineteen, was in charge of the junior classes. A competent and enthusiastic Latinist, he gave his pupil that grounding in the language which enabled John to quote the Vulgate in all his writings as if it were his mother tongue. St. Francis Borgia, in later years, invited the Jesuit to give up teaching grammar and apply himself to theology. Bonifacio answered in the Psalmist's words, "This shall be my rest forever. Here will I dwell, for I have a delight therein."<sup>1</sup> "In this service I wish to die, for I seek the salvation of my soul, and in this work God has shown me great favours." He refused to become a professor at Madrid on the ground that in the capital he could not "train a good student in a hundred

<sup>1</sup> Psalm cxxxii. 15 (Prayer Book Version).

years." "The Court," he bluntly wrote, "is Babylon."

Until about the age of twenty, it is believed, Juan de Yepes was receiving instruction at the college. At twenty-one he entered a Carmelite monastery in Medina, and somewhat later became a student in the University of Salamanca. His life, from youth onwards, was marked by austere piety. Though he came into close touch at Salamanca with the best literary and philosophical culture of his age, he wished to enter "that steep and silent city,"<sup>1</sup> the Carthusian Order. During 1567, however, he met St. Teresa at Medina del Campo, where she was planning with Antonio de Heredia for the establishment of a Reformed Carmelite house for men. "Shortly afterwards," wrote Teresa, "there chanced to come there a Father who was young, and was still studying in Salamanca. A companion of his, who came with him, told me great things of the life which this Father led; he was called Fray John of the Cross. I praised our Lord, and when I spoke with Fray John I was very much pleased. I learned from him that he desired to join the Carthusians. When I told him what I purposed to do, and begged him urgently to wait till the Lord should give us a monastery, . . . he gave me his word to do so; provided that the delay was not great. When I saw that I had two friars to begin with, I considered the matter settled."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Jean Baruzi.

<sup>2</sup> From the "Book of the Foundations." The passage is translated by Prof. Allison Peers in "Studies of the Spanish Mystics" (1927), p. 232.

“Fray Juan was now twenty-five years old ; frail and worn by the life of austerity which he had lived, first from necessity and then from choice, since his childhood ; so small of stature that St. Teresa characteristically said she had found not two friars, but ‘a friar and a half.’” Ten years later her verdict was, “I have not found another like him in the whole of Castile, nor one that inspires with such fervour those that tread the way to heaven. See then how great a treasure you have in that saint.” Dr. Baruzi thinks that Teresa herself stood somewhat in awe of the man whose mystical experiences were high, remote, and pure, as if his soul breathed continually a thin, sharp, mountain air. As regards the concerns of this world, the spirit of the Reformed Carmelite friars may be understood from a story told of Fray Antonio Heredia, who as an ex-prior over the age of sixty, joined John of the Cross at Duruelo. “He came to Valladolid to speak with me in high delight,” wrote Teresa, “and told me what he had gathered together, which was indeed little : he had provided himself with nothing more than hour-glasses, of which he had five, which amused me highly. He told me that he did not want to go unprovided with means for regulating the hours. I even think he has not got a bed.” The use of these hour-glasses was an earnest business to the Spanish seekers. They would have understood the words of Jacob Behmen which Dr. Whyte has quoted : “If thou dost once every hour throw thyself by faith beyond all creatures into the abysmal mercy of God, into the sufferings of Christ, and into



the fellowship of His intercession, then thou shalt receive power from above to rule over the world, and death, and the devil, and hell itself."

It was late in November when the two friars settled at Duruelo, and they were exposed to the rigours of a Castilian winter, when fierce blasts sweep down from the Sierra de Gredos. They had each a tiny cell or hermitage, with a small window looking on the chapel, and there they remained for long hours in solitary prayer. Sometimes when their orisons were over, and they were at liberty to go outside, their habits were found to be white with snow, though they had never noticed that snow was falling.

The hatred of the unreformed Carmelites was stirred against John of the Cross because of the growing success of his labours. "House after house," says Professor Peers, "was added to the number of those following the primitive rule, until the friars of the mitigation began to fear that the Reform would spread throughout the Order. They determined at last to take action. A general Chapter met in the summer of 1575, and decreed that all the houses of the Reform but the two originally sanctioned should be suppressed. A friar hostile to the Reform was appointed visitor of Spain. The war, in short, between Calced and Discalced had begun, and before the end of 1577 St. John of the Cross was in prison at Toledo."<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Baruzi has given a detailed account of the cruel sufferings endured in prison by one of the greatest Spaniards of all time. He succeeded

<sup>1</sup> "Studies of the Spanish Mystics" (1927), p. 234.

after some months in escaping from his enemies. Although it cannot be ascertained with certainty whether he wrote either his most famous lyric, "The Dark Night of the Soul," or indeed any other poem, during the period of his captivity, Dr. Baruzi is probably right in tracing his deepest lyrical inspiration to that time of anguish. In "The Dark Night of the Soul" the poet describes an adventure of the human spirit. He tells of one who glides down a staircase at dead of night, disguised even though darkness covers him. He listens, almost as the thief listens, for the faintest sound behind him. Three times in ten lines the word "dark" is mentioned. The night-wanderer is entering, as he tells us, on a pathway unmolested by the world, the flesh, and the devil. The nearest parallel in Scripture to the expressions of the poem is the verse in Second Peter which Browning used in his "Easter Day": "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night." The Spanish mystic pictures the soul creeping from shadow to shadow in a house of sleepers, intent upon its holy quest. An old Scottish paraphrase thus interprets the verse in the Epistle:

" Yet as the night-wrapp'd thief that lurks  
To seize th' expected prize,  
Thus steals the hour when Christ shall come,  
And thunder rend the skies."

That "night-wrapp'd thief," the soul about to enter into spiritual union with its Beloved, steals like a fugitive from earth's besetting cares. "Under the shadow of Thy wings shall be my

refuge, until these calamities be overpast.”<sup>1</sup> It is possible that the very idea of the nocturnal pilgrimage came to the poet while he was planning, with that careful effort to which tradition testifies, his escape from the horrible confinement at Toledo. He searched the Bible for sounds and voices from the darkness. A text he loved was Exodus xiv. 20: “When it was dark, the cloud lit up the night.”<sup>2</sup> He dwelt on the parable in St. Luke of the man who went to his friend at midnight, and asked for three loaves. These loaves represented to him the three Christian graces: faith, hope, and love. The midnight seeker was like the Psalmist “thinking to himself by night,” whose “spirit made diligent search,” or like the prophet who wrote, “With my soul have I desired Thee in the night.” Would not the Spaniard have been pleased with Jean François Millet, who at the age of eighteen drew a picture illustrating the passage in St. Luke? It is a starry night, and we see a man coming out of a house bearing loaves which another man beside him is eagerly receiving.

Like all the Spanish mystics, St. John of the Cross left directions for private prayer. He thought it was most fittingly offered in a solitary, austere place, where the mind may lift itself wholly and directly towards God, without being hindered or delayed amid visible things. Our Lord taught His disciples to include all their requests in the

<sup>1</sup> Psalm lvii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> So Dr. Moffatt translates the words, and his version is closest to the mystic's commentary: “A wondrous thing, that being dark it illumined the night!”

seven invocations of the Lord's Prayer, and to create within themselves, as it were, a continuous activity of prayer, entirely founded on that form which He Himself had given. And as for the place of prayer, Christ said, "Enter into thy inner chamber," while it was His own custom to seek "lonely deserts in the best and most tranquil period of the night."<sup>1</sup> In this habit St. John of the Cross imitated His Divine Master, for eye-witnesses have testified that he sometimes spent whole nights kneeling in the open air, in wooded places, or among the reeds on a river-bank.<sup>2</sup> A passionate love of nature breathes through all his poetry. He distrusted visions and locutions, emotional excitement, and exaggerated fervour. It is possible, he says, to spend whole nights in prayer and yet to yield to the temptations of spiritual pride. He warns his readers also against the indulgence of a taste for luxury in devotion, a liking for costly images, crosses, rosaries.

His latter years were spent in the service of his Order, but he suffered persecution once again from those among the Reformed Carmelites who wished to alter the Teresian rule. It is said that if he had lived a few months longer he might have been banished from his native land, or sent as a missionary to America. He died at Ubeda on December 14, 1591, at the age of forty-nine, a few months after his Salamancan contemporary, Fray Luis de León.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Jean Baruzi, "Saint Jean de la Croix," pp. 270-271.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 287.



## CHAPTER XIX

### PRIVATE PRAYER IN SHAKESPEARE

JOHN MASEFIELD, in his Romanes Lecture, described Shakespeare as a child of superstition. "Religion meant almost nothing to him, education little more, tradition a great deal more, superstition very much indeed. . . . He held to no religion save that of humanity and his own great nature. The great men of his time were not men of religion. To the cultured it was an age of belief in past ages ; to Shakespeare, who had no culture, it was an age of belief in himself. Shakespeare and his fellows exalted the miracle of man. Of spiritual religious belief these pagans had hardly a trace."<sup>1</sup>

If religion meant "almost nothing" to Shakespeare, why are his plays so full of references to private prayer? We take here only a few examples.

Warrior princes on the eve of battle are withdrawn from the camp as into a secret oratory. Henry V, before Agincourt, and Richmond, before Bosworth, sought heavenly aid in the crises of their fortunes. Victory and early death were to be Henry's portion. He echoes the words of the *De Profundis* :

<sup>1</sup> From "The Times" report, June 5, 1924.



"If Thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss,  
O Lord, who may abide it?"

"Not to-day, O Lord!

O! not to-day, think not upon the fault  
My father made in compassing the crown."

In the chill hour before dawn he offers his  
expiation:

"I have built

Two chantries, where the sad and solemn priests  
Sing still for Richard's soul. More will I do;  
Though all that I can do is nothing worth,  
Since that my penitence comes after all,  
Imploring pardon."

Confession of sin and prayer for salvation through the merits of the Redeemer are the last utterance of that solitary prayer. "My soul fleeth unto the Lord before the morning watch. O Israel, trust in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption."

When Henry was dying we are told he bade his chaplains recite the seven penitential Psalms. As they reached the words, "Build Thou the walls of Jerusalem," he interrupted them, and said aloud that he had fully intended, after subduing France, to conquer the Kingdom of Jerusalem. The priests went on with their devotions. In the midst of them he cried out again, as if addressing some invisible adversary, "Thou liest, thou liest; my place is with the Lord." Then with a still louder voice, *In manus tuas, Domine*—and so passed away. The day of his death was the last of August. He had just completed his thirty-fourth year.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A. J. Church, "Henry V," p. 147, and cf. Miss Yonge's passage quoted above, pp. 93, 94.

Seventy years after Agincourt, at another turning-point of English history, Shakespeare allows us to hear the lonely prayer of Henry, Earl of Richmond (afterwards King Henry VII), in the tent on Bosworth field. Like his predecessor, the great Henry, he pleads that the God of battles may steel his soldiers' hearts and grant victory to the right. Then he feels himself helpless as a child in the menacing night, and seeks protection, as Banquo does in "Macbeth" against the onset of ghostly enemies.

"To Thee I do commend my watchful soul,  
Ere I let fall the windows of mine eyes:  
Sleeping and waking, O defend me still!"

The wounded French lord, Melun, in "King John," craves the privilege of withdrawal "from the noise and rumour of the field." Like the dying Henry Seyton in "The Abbot," he might have said, "Trouble yourself no more with me; this is my first and last battle, and I have already seen too much of it to wish to see the close."

"Bear me hence . . .  
Where I may think the remnant of my thoughts  
In peace, and part this body and my soul  
With contemplation and devout desires." <sup>1</sup>

A Christian's old age, with its qualities of self-denial, fidelity, and dependence on a Heavenly Father's guidance, is presented very beautifully by Shakespeare in the character of Adam, servant of the house of Sir Rowland de Bois, in "As You Like It," and companion of Orlando in his wanderings. Adam hands over to his young master

<sup>1</sup> "King John," Act v, Sc. 4.

the five hundred crowns which represented the prudent savings of a lifetime now prolonged almost to the eightieth year.

“ I have five hundred crowns,  
The thrifty hire I sav'd under your father,  
Which I did store to be my foster-nurse  
When service should in my old limbs lie lame,  
And unregarded age in corners thrown.  
Take that ; and He that doth the ravens feed,  
Yea, providently caters for the sparrow,  
Be comfort to my age ! Here is the gold :  
All this I give you. Let me be your servant.” <sup>1</sup>

Old Testament references to prayers offered three times daily must have been well known to Shakespeare. In Psalm lv. 17, we read, “ Evening and morning and noon, will I pray, and cry aloud : and He shall hear my voice.” Daniel “ kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks unto his God.” In “ Cymbeline ” we find Imogen talking thus with Pisanio about the departure of her exiled husband, Posthumus Leonatus :

*Imogen* : “ I did not take my leave of him, but had  
Most pretty things to say : ere I could tell him  
How I would think on him at certain hours,  
Such thoughts and such ; or I could make him swear  
The shes of Italy should not betray  
Mine interest and his honour ; or have charged him,  
At the sixth hour of morn, at noon, at midnight,  
To encounter me with orisons, for then  
I am in heaven for him ; or ere I could  
Give him that parting kiss which I had set  
Betwixt two charming words, comes in my father  
And, like the tyrannous breating of the north,  
Shakes all our buds from growing.” <sup>2</sup>

Young men and women, in the Plays, direct

<sup>1</sup> Act ii, Sc. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Act i, Sc. 3.

their thoughts heavenwards. We have, for example, the ejaculatory prayer of Romeo :

“ But He that hath the steerage of my course  
Direct my sail.”

Isabella, in “Measure for Measure,” speaks of

“ true prayers  
That shall be up at heaven, and enter there  
Ere sunrise : prayers from preserved souls,  
From fasting maids, whose minds are dedicate  
To nothing temporal.”<sup>1</sup>

“ We do pray for mercy,” says Portia in “The Merchant of Venice.”

Ferdinand, in “The Tempest,” says to Miranda :

“ I do beseech you,  
Chiefly that I might set it in my prayers,  
What is your name ? ”

“The Tempest,” according to Sir Sidney Lee, “was in all probability the latest drama that Shakespeare completed.” The Epilogue, “spoken by Prospero,” closes with these words :

“ Now I want  
Spirits to enforce, art to enchant ;  
And my ending is despair,  
Unless I be relieved by prayer,  
Which pierces so, that it assaults  
Mercy itself, and frees all faults.”

Shakespeare had heard the sighing of prisoners immured in the Tower of London in the century before his own. In “King Richard III” he puts a prayer which was not for self into the lips of Clarence ere he sinks into the sleep that was interrupted by the arrival of his murderers :

<sup>1</sup> Act. ii, Sc. 2.

"O God ! if my deep prayers cannot appease Thee,  
 But Thou wilt be avenged on my misdeeds,  
 Yet execute Thy wrath in me alone ;  
 O spare my guiltless wife and my poor children ! "

When Tyrrel arrives to tell Richard that the two little Princes had been murdered in the Tower, he recalls in private soliloquy before the King enters the heart-shaking report of the assassins :

" 'Lo, thus,' quoth Dighton, 'lay those tender babes.'  
 'Thus, thus,' quoth Forrest, 'girdling one another  
 Within their innocent alabaster arms :  
 Their lips were four red roses on a stalk,  
 Which in their summer beauty kiss'd each other.  
 A book of prayers on their pillow lay  
 Which once,' quoth Forrest, 'almost changed my mind.' "

The Roman soldier Menecrates, in "Antony and Cleopatra," talks with Pompey on answered and unanswered prayers :

"*Pompey* : If the great gods be just, they shall assist  
 The deeds of justest men.  
 "*Mene.* : Know, worthy Pompey,  
 That what they do delay, they not deny.  
 "*Pom.* : Whiles we are suitors to their throne, decays  
 The thing we sue for.  
 "*Mene.* : We, ignorant of ourselves,  
 Beg often our own harms, which the wise powers  
 Deny us for our good ; so find we profit  
 By losing of our prayers." <sup>1</sup>

"The poet, like the creative artist," says Heiler, "is the acutely sensitive psychologist, who knows and interprets the most delicate and secret movements of the heart. The prayers which he puts into the mouth of his heroes never were uttered in that precise form by human lips, yet he has

<sup>1</sup> Act ii, Sc. 1.



heard them in the world of living reality. They are genuine, not literary prayers. If the prayer-formularies of priests, theologians, and edifying writers partly reflect the prayer-spirit of a certain stage of culture, epoch of piety, or religious community, the prayers of poets of genius are rather direct documents of the unstudied sincere devotion of the simple man. As we think of the fresh and original prayers in Homer and the Greek tragedians, or of the 'Neige, du Schmerzensreiche' of Gretchen in Goethe's 'Faust,' or of the hymn 'Vergine madre' in Dante's 'Paradise,' we have no hesitation in ranking the prayers in the creative works of great poets among prayer-testimonies of the first order."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Das Gebet," pp. 33, 34.

## CHAPTER XX

### IN PURITAN ENGLAND

DR. WHYTE quotes these words from his favourite Puritan writer, Thomas Goodwin: "I have known men who came to God for nothing else but just to come to Him, they so loved Him. They scorned to soil Him and themselves with any other errand than just purely to be alone with Him in His presence."

Surely we may apply to the Puritan age these words of Dean Inge: "The evidence of the saints seems to me to be absolutely trustworthy. . . . Do we know of any who have sought after the knowledge of God as diligently as other men seek after wealth and honour, and have come away empty-handed?"<sup>1</sup>

Like Patience in Bunyan's allegory, the Puritan accepted the law of that Governor who would have his children "stay for their best things till the beginning of next year." Passion would have all now, but Patience was willing to wait—to wait, as John Newton says—

"Till the promised hour appears,  
When the sons of God shall prove  
All their Father's boundless love."

Spenser's "Faerie Queene," it has been said, is Puritan to the core. "In the temper and aim of

<sup>1</sup> At the Sheffield Church Congress, 1922.

his work," writes J. R. Green, "we catch the nobler and deeper tones of English Puritanism." Is it not a significant fact that neglect of prayer should be one of the faults ascribed to "sluggish Idleness the nurse of sin" ?

"Upon a slothful Asse he chose to ryde,  
 Arrayed in habit blacke, and amis thin  
 Like to an holy Monck, the service to begin ;  
 And in his hand his Portesse <sup>1</sup> still he bare  
 That much was worne, but therein little red,  
 For of devòtion he had little care,  
 Still drownd in sleepe and most of his dayes ded."

Greater even than Spenser was John Milton. "No lawyer, physician, statesman," says Mark Pattison, "ever laboured to fit himself for his profession harder than Milton strove to qualify himself for his vocation of poet. . . . To knowledge and virtue must be added religion. For it is from God that the poet's thoughts come. 'This is not to be obtained but by devout prayer to that Eternal Spirit that can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out His seraphim with the hallowed fire of His altar to touch and purify the life of whom He pleases. To this must be added industrious and select reading, steady observation, and insight into all seemly and generous acts and affairs ; till which in some measure be compast, I refuse not to sustain this expectation.' Before the piety of this vow, Dr. Johnson's morosity yields for a moment, and he is forced to exclaim, 'From a promise like this, at once fervid, pious, and rational, might be expected the *Paradise Lost*.' " "The

<sup>1</sup> Portable breviary.

notion that his life was like Samuel's, a dedicated life, dedicated to a service which required a long probation, recurs more than once," Mark Pattison reminds us, in Milton's writings.

S. R. Gardiner describes in these words the last moments of Strafford, who was beheaded on Tower Hill in the presence of 200,000 persons on May 12, 1641 :

"Having fulfilled all earthly duties, he prepared himself for death. 'I thank God,' he said, as he took off his upper garment, 'I am not afraid of death nor daunted with any discouragement rising from my fears, but do as cheerfully put off my doublet at this time as ever I did when I went to bed.' The executioner then drew out a handkerchief to cover his eyes. 'Thou shalt not bind mine eyes,' said Strafford, 'for I will see it done.' He placed his neck upon the block, telling the executioner that after he had meditated awhile, he would spread forth his hands as a sign to him to strike. After a little while the hands were spread to grasp the mantle of the Eternal Father. The blow fell, and that life of disappointed toil had reached its end."<sup>1</sup>

In Browning's "Strafford," the condemned statesman is visited in his last hours in prison by King Charles I, who pleads with him :

"Only, curse me not,"

Hollis says to Strafford :

"As you hope grace and pardon in your need,  
Be merciful to this most wretched man."

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<sup>1</sup> "History of England," vol. ix, p. 370.

Strafford says, as he is about to depart for the place of execution :

“ Earth fades, heaven breaks on me. I shall stand next  
Before God’s throne : the moment’s close at hand  
When man the first, last time, has leave to lay  
His whole heart bare before its Maker, leave  
To clear up the long error of a life  
And choose one happiness for evermore.  
With all mortality about me, Charles,  
The sudden wreck, the dregs of violent death—  
What if, despite the opening angel-song,  
There penetrate one prayer for you ? Be saved  
Through me ! ”

Archbishop Laud, who followed Strafford in 1645, spoke these words on the scaffold :

“ Lord, I am coming as fast as I can. I know I must pass through the shadow of death before I can come to see Thee. But that is only *umbra mortis*, a shadow of death, a little darkness upon nature ; since Thou, Lord, by Thy goodness, has broken the jaws and the power of death.”

Soldiers of the Puritan age, both Cavaliers and Roundheads, sought the help of private prayer. Sir Jacob Astley, one of the Royalist leaders at the battle of Edgehill (October 23, 1642), offered this prayer before the fighting opened : “ O Lord, Thou knowest how busy I must be this day. If I forget Thee, do not Thou forget me.” Then he gave the word of command, “ March on, boys ! ”<sup>1</sup>

Of Philip Skippon, who was appointed on the eve of the Civil War to take command of the City of London trained bands, the historian writes, “ A pious, practical soldier, who had risen

<sup>1</sup> S. R. Gardiner, “ History of the Great Civil War,” vol. i, p. 44.



from the ranks, he was the very man to command a Puritan force. 'Come, my boys,' he once said when battle was approaching, 'my brave boys, let us pray heartily and fight heartily. I will run the same fortunes and hazards with you.'"<sup>1</sup>

To his son Henry Cromwell, Sub-Deputy in Ireland, the Protector wrote, in a letter which Carlyle compares to "a staff dipped in honeycomb and brought to one's lips": "I am glad to hear what I have heard of your carriage: study still to be innocent; and to answer every occasion, roll yourself upon God, which to do needs much grace. Cry to the Lord to give you a plain single heart."

Mr. Cradock wrote to Cromwell in 1652 that his heart overflowed with prayers and praise to God for sending such a man; that he had often stepped aside to pray for him, in some thicket or ditch by the wayside, while travelling along and thinking of him.<sup>2</sup>

After the storming of Bristol in 1645, Cromwell wrote in closing his despatch to William Lenthall, Speaker of the Commons: "Thus I have given you a true, but not a full, account of this great business; wherein he that runs may read, that all this is none other than the work of God. He must be a very Atheist that doth not acknowledge it.

"It may be thought that some praises are due to those gallant men, of whose valour so much

<sup>1</sup> S. R. Gardiner's "History of England, 1603-42," vol. x, p. 148.

<sup>2</sup> Carlyle, "Letters and Speeches," vol. iv, preface to Letter CXCI.

mention is made :—their humble suit to you and all that have an interest in this blessing is, That in the remembrance of God's praises they be forgotten. It's their joy that they are instruments of God's glory and their country's good. It's their honour that God vouchsafes to use them. Sir, they that have been employed in this service know that faith and prayer obtained this City for you : I do not say ours only, but of the people of God with you and all England over, who have wrestled with God for a blessing in this very thing. Our desires are, that God may be glorified by the same spirit of faith by which we ask all our sufficiency, and have received it. It is meet that He have all the praise." <sup>1</sup>

Hugh Peters, Cromwell's Secretary, in describing to the House of Commons the capture of Basing House (October 1645), wrote : "This is now the twentieth garrison that hath been taken in, this Summer, by this Army ;—and, I believe most of them are answers of the prayers, and trophies of the faith, of some of God's servants. The Commander of this Brigade (Oliver Cromwell) had spent much time with God in prayer the night before the storm ; and seldom fights without some text of Scripture to support him. This time he rested upon that blessed word of God written in the Hundred-and-fifteenth Psalm, eighth verse, *They that make them are like unto them ; so is every one that trusteth in them.* Which, with some verses going before, was now accomplished." <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Carlyle, "Letters and Speeches," Letter XXXI.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, I, p. 213.

September 2, 1650, was the eve of the battle of Dunbar. Carlyle, in a famous passage, describes the night-hours of suspense in Cromwell's army :

"The night is wild and wet ;—2nd of September means 12th by our calendar ; the Harvest Moon wades deep among clouds of sleet and hail. Whoever has a heart for prayer, let him pray now, for the wrestle of death is at hand. Pray,—and withal keep his powder dry ! And be ready for extremities, and quit himself like a man !—Thus they pass the night ; making that Dunbar Peninsula and Brock Rivulet long memorable to me. We English have some tents ; the Scots have none. The hoarse sea moans bodeful, swinging low and heavy against these whinstone bays ; the sea and the tempests are abroad, all else asleep but we,—and there is One that rides on the wings of the wind.

"Towards three in the morning the Scotch foot, by order of a Major-General say some, extinguish their matches, all but two in a company ; cower under the corn-shocks, seeking some imperfect shelter and sleep. Be wakeful, ye English ; watch and pray, and keep your powder dry. . . . With overpowering force let us storm the Scots right wing there ; beat that, and all is beaten. Major Hodgson, riding along, heard, he says, ' a Cornet praying in the night ' ; a company of poor men, I think, making worship there, under the void heaven, before battle joined : Major Hodgson, giving his charge to a brother Officer, turned aside to listen for a minute, and worship and pray along with them ; haply his last prayer

on this Earth, as it might prove to be. But no ; this Cornet prayed with such effusion as was wonderful ; and imparted strength to my Yorkshire friend, who strengthened his men by telling them of it. And the heavens, in their mercy, I think, have opened us a way of deliverance ! —The Moon gleams out, hard and blue, riding among hail-clouds ; and over St. Abb's Head a streak of dawn is rising."

Major Hodgson was near Cromwell when the victory was decided, and heard him say, " They run ! I profess they run ! " " And over St. Abb's Head and the German Ocean, just then, bursts the first gleam of the level Sun upon us, ' and I heard Nol say, in the words of the Psalmist, Let God arise, Let His enemies be scattered. ' "

## CHAPTER XXI

GEORGE FOX

THE Preface written by William Penn for the "Journal of George Fox" is one of the masterpieces of seventeenth-century English. Penn describes the Quaker Apostle as "a man that God endued with a clear and wonderful depth, a discerner of others' spirits, and very much a master of his own. . . . Above all he excelled in prayer. The inwardness and weight of his spirit, the reverence and solemnity of his address and behaviour, and the fewness and fulness of his words have often struck even strangers with admiration, as they used to reach others with consolation. The most awful, living, reverent frame I ever felt or beheld, I must say, was his in prayer. And truly it was a testimony he knew and lived nearer to the Lord than other men ; for they that know Him most will see most reason to approach Him with reverence and fear."

George Fox was received in the spirit and power of Christ "as the first and chief elder" of his age. "I never saw him out of his place," writes Penn, "or not a match for every service or occasion. For in all things he acquitted himself like a man, yea, a strong man, a new and heavenly minded man ; a divine and a naturalist,



and all of God Almighty's making. . . . Thus he lived and sojourned among us : and as he lived, so he died ; feeling the same eternal power, that had raised and preserved him, in his last moments."

Recalling his early conflicts, when he would take his Bible and sit in hollow trees and lonesome places till night came on, Fox wrote in his "Journal": "As I cannot declare the misery I was in, it was so great and heavy upon me, so neither can I set forth the mercies of God unto me in all my misery. Oh, soul, when I was in great distress when my troubles and torments were great, then was His love exceeding great."

Fox was only twenty-three when there came to him a sublime vision. He had been deeply troubled beforehand. "I could find none to open my condition to," he writes, "but the Lord alone, unto whom I cried night and day." Later on the cloud lifted. "I saw that there was an ocean of darkness and death, but an infinite ocean of light and love which flowed over the ocean of darkness. In that also I saw the infinite love of God, and I had great openings."

In 1648, when the Civil War was in its later stages, Fox, aged twenty-four, astonished gatherings of professing Christians by his power in prayer, and by the fervour of his arguments. "Let the youth speak, let the youth speak," cried Captain Amor Stoddard when he saw how experienced controversialists tried to bear down the young man with many words.

In the dauntless courage with which he sustained almost incredible persecutions and sufferings, George Fox's career seems to come nearest in Christian records to that of St. Paul. He was upheld, like the Apostle, by consciously realised supernatural power. Here, for example, is a scene, typical of many, which belongs to the year 1652 :

"Now when they had haled me to the common moss-side (near Ulverston) a multitude of people following the constables and other officers gave me some blows over my back with their willow-rods, and so thrust me among the rude multitude, who, having furnished themselves, some with staves, some with hedge-stakes, and others with holm-bushes, fell upon me, and beat me on the head, arms, and shoulders, till they had mazed me, so that I fell down upon the wet common. When I recovered again, and saw myself lying in a water common, and the people standing about me, I lay still a little while ; and the power of the Lord sprang through me, and the eternal refreshings refreshed me so that I stood up again in the strengthening power of the Eternal God ; and stretching out my arms amongst them, I said with a loud voice, 'Strike again ; here are my arms, my head, and my cheeks.' " <sup>1</sup>

Amid his worst trials, George Fox could say from the heart, "Thus the Lord's blessed power, which is over all, carried me through and over this exercise, gave dominion over His enemies,

<sup>1</sup> "Journal of George Fox," edited by Norman Penney, F.S.H., ch. iii.

and enabled me to go on in His glorious work and service for His great name's sake. For though the beast make the war against the saints, yet the Lamb hath got, and will get, the victory."

## CHAPTER XXII

JOHN BUNYAN

FRIEDRICH HEILER has described John Bunyan as the greatest religious genius of the English race. Rabbi Duncan put "Grace Abounding" even before St. Augustine's "Confessions" among books of religious experience. We look to Bunyan, and not in vain, for instruction in the life of prayer. Even before his full conversion he was carrying out the counsel of St. James, "If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God." Much perplexed by the antinomian teachings which he found in "some Ranters' Books . . . highly in esteem by several old professors," he offered this prayer :

"O Lord, I am a fool, and not able to know the truth from error. Lord, leave me not to my own blindness, either to approve of, or condemn, this Doctrine. If it be of God, let me not despise it ; if it be of the Devil, let me not embrace it. Lord, I lay my soul, in this matter, only at Thy foot ; let me not be deceived, I humbly beseech Thee."

"Blessed be God," he said, when recalling that petition, "who put it into my heart to cry to Him to be kept and directed, still distrusting mine own wisdom ; for I have since seen even the effect of that prayer in His preserving me

not only from Ranting errors, but from those also that have sprung up since."

Like Brother Lawrence, Bunyan acquired the habit of continually conversing with God.

"Indeed I was then never out of the Bible," he tells us, "either by reading or meditation; still crying out to God, that I might know the truth, and way to heaven and glory." "Now also I should pray wherever I was," he writes again, "whether at home or abroad, in house or field, and should also often, with lifting up of heart, sing that of the Fifty-first Psalm, *O Lord, consider my distress*; for as yet I knew not where I was."

Terrible experiences are recorded in this autobiographic record. "Woe be to him," wrote Bunyan, "against whom the Scriptures bend themselves." One text hung over him for many months like a black thundercloud. He believed that in an unguarded moment, and by the passing thought "Let Him go, if He will," he had denied his Saviour, and committed the unpardonable sin. The passage which tortured him almost to the endangering of his reason was Hebrews xii. 16, 17: "Or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat, sold his birthright; for ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears."

His consolations during this period of misery came from gleams flashed upon him in prayer. He has recorded one strange answer that came



with rushing wind. “Once as I was walking to and fro in a good man’s shop, bemoaning of myself in my sad and doleful state, afflicting myself with self-aborrence for this wicked and ungodly thought ; lamenting, also, this hard hap of mine, for that I should commit so great a sin, greatly fearing I should not be pardoned ; praying, also, in my heart, that if this sin of mine did differ from that against the Holy Ghost, the Lord would show it me ; and being now ready to sink with fear, suddenly there was, as if there had rustled in at the window, the noise of wind upon me, but very pleasant, and as if I had heard a voice speaking, *Didst ever refuse to be justified by the blood of Christ ?* And withal my whole life of profession past was, in a moment, opened to me, wherein I was made to see that designedly I had not ; so my heart answered groaningly, *No*. Then fell, with power, the word of God upon me, *See that ye refuse not him that speaketh*. This made a strange seizure upon my spirit ; it brought light with it, and commanded a silence in my heart of all those tumultuous thoughts that before did use, like masterless hell-hounds, to roar and bellow, and make a hideous noise within me. It showed me, also, that Jesus Christ had yet a word of grace and mercy for me, that He had not, as I feared, quite forsaken and cast off my soul ; yea, this was a kind of chide for my proneness to desperation ; a kind of threatening of me if I did not, notwithstanding my sins and the heinousness of them, venture my salvation upon the Son of God.”

That “sudden rushing wind” calmed his

spirit like the wind that blew upon the Ancient Mariner in the hour of his despair.

“ It raised my hair, it fanned my cheek,  
Like a meadow-gale of spring.  
It mingled strangely with my fears,  
Yet it felt like a welcoming.”

The tempter of souls tried to persuade him that his prayers were presumptuous, and could only increase his guilt, “yet, my case being desperate, I thought with myself, I can but die ; and if it must be so it shall once be said, *that such an one died at the foot of Christ in prayer.* This I did, but with great difficulty, God doth know ; and that because, together with this, still that saying about Esau would be set at my heart, even like a flaming sword to keep the way of the tree of life, lest I should take thereof and live. Oh ! who knows how hard a thing I found it to come to God in prayer ! ”

Looking back on this time of spiritual dereliction, Bunyan blamed himself because he had failed, in his prayers beforehand, to ask deliverance from temptations to come. “ For though, as I can say with truth,” he writes, “ my soul was much in prayer before this trial seized me, yet then I prayed only, or at the most principally, for the removal of present troubles, and for fresh discoveries of His love in Christ ; which I saw afterwards was not enough to do. I should also have prayed that the great God would keep me from the evil that was to come. . . . And truly this very thing is to this day of such weight and awe upon me, that I dare not, when I come before the Lord, go off my knees until I entreat

Him for help and mercy against the temptations that are to come."

The most potent weapon in the equipment of Bunyan's pilgrim is named All-Prayer. The ladies of the House Beautiful had armed Christian with "sword, shield, helmet, breastplate, all-prayer, and shoes that would not wear out." "They harnessed him from head to foot with what was of proof, lest perhaps he should meet with assaults in the way." His worst conflict came in the Valley of the Shadow of Death amid flame and smoke, sparks, and hideous noises. There were in that valley "things that cared not for Christian's sword, as did Apollyon before." "He was forced to put up his sword, and betake him to another weapon, called All-Prayer, so he cried in my hearing, 'O Lord, I beseech Thee, deliver my soul.'"

The profound genius of Bunyan, exercised in the most mysterious sorrows of the heart, taught him a truth hidden from George Meredith, that no invincible sword is committed to man on earth. In his allegory, "The Shaving of Shagpat," Meredith tells of "a sword that nought on earth or under resisteth, and before the keen edge of which all Illusions and Identicals are as summer grass to the scythe." With that Sword of Events the father of the seven sons of Aklis vanquished "the mighty Roc, Kroojis, that threatened mankind with ruin, and a stain of the Roc's blood is yet on the hilt of the sword."

Christian was armed, not with the sword of events, but with "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." Yet the Bible failed him

in the Valley of the Shadow. Has not Bunyan written, "Woe be to the man against whom the Scriptures bend themselves"? Texts could not save him in that mortal extremity, when he thought he should be torn in pieces, or trodden down like mire in the streets. Nay, the Scriptures appeared sometimes in league with his foes to overwhelm him, the sword of the House Beautiful turning into a fiery blade with its point directed against his own breast. When every other weapon failed, and the strong shoes were sinking in the mire, All-Prayer sustained the pilgrim till the sun rose upon the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Two voices had been heard in the blackness, while "the fiends seemed to come nearer and nearer." One was his own "most vehement voice," "I will walk in the strength of the Lord God." The other came to him in his disconsolate condition like the voice of a man going before him saying, "Though I walk through the valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear none ill, for Thou art with me."

Bunyan's own experience is mirrored in the confession made by Hopeful to his companion, when the pilgrims were crossing the Enchanted Ground. Faithful, the martyr of Vanity Fair, had been Hopeful's spiritual teacher, who bade him go to Christ and see. "Then I said it was presumption. He said, No; for I was invited to come. Then he gave me a book of Jesus His inditing, to encourage me the more freely to come; and he said concerning that book, that every jot and tittle thereof stood firmer than heaven and earth. Then I asked him what I



must do when I came ; and he told me, I must entreat upon my knees, with all my heart and soul, the Father to reveal Him to me. Then I asked him further how I must make my supplication to Him ; and he said, Go, and thou shalt find Him upon a mercy-seat, where He sits, all the year long, to give pardon and forgiveness to them that come. I told him that I knew not what to say when I came ; and he bid me say to this effect : God be merciful to me a sinner, and make me know and believe in Jesus Christ ; for I see, that if His righteousness had not been, or I have not faith in that righteousness, I am utterly cast away. Lord, I have heard that Thou art a merciful God, and hast ordained that Thy Son Jesus Christ should be the Saviour of the world ; and moreover, that Thou art willing to bestow Him upon such a poor sinner as I am. And I am a sinner indeed. Lord, take therefore this opportunity, and magnify Thy grace in the salvation of my soul, through Thy Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

*Christian*.—"And did you do as you were bidden ?"

*Hopeful*.—"Yes, over, and over, and over."

*Christian*.—"And did the Father reveal His Son to you ?"

*Hopeful*.—"No, not at the first, nor second, nor third, nor fourth, nor fifth, no, nor at the sixth time neither."

*Christian*.—"What did you do then ?"

*Hopeful*.—"What ? why I could not tell what to do."

*Christian*.—"Had you not thoughts of leaving off praying ?"



*Hopeful.*—"Yes ; a hundred times twice told."

*Christian.*—"And what was the reason you did not ? "

*Hopeful.*—"I believed that that was true which had been told me, to wit, that without the righteousness of this Christ, all the world could not save me ; and therefore, thought I with myself, if I leave off, I die, and I can but die at the throne of grace. And withal, this came into my mind, If it tarry, wait for it ; because it will surely come, and will not tarry. So I continued praying, until the Father showed me His Son."

## CHAPTER XXIII

### PORT ROYAL AND PASCAL

THE history of Port Royal, which extends over the greater part of the seventeenth century, has been preserved for the later world, not only by Roman Catholic and Protestant theologians, but by masters of literature like Sainte Beuve, and by a host of modern essayists. We learn how men and women, born to rank and riches in the most brilliant society of Paris, chose a life of solitude, unceasing labour, and prayer. Like medieval mystics, they were "content to live and die, deprived of every gift of God, save the gift of Himself." It is with awe that we remember their lives of self-abnegation and suffering, of which the sternest example was given by members of the Arnauld family like Le Maître, the eloquent advocate, and his brother Sericourt, a gallant officer. Each of these men withdrew in the early lustre of a promising career to endure the hermit's hard lot, at Port Royal des Champs : each died in early middle life, worn out with fasting and penance. Three generations of the Arnaulds accepted in teaching and practice those Christian ideals which exalted monastic austerity above the normal acceptance of social duty. Converts to the Jansenist interpretation of St. Augustine's theology were expected, if they chose to retain their freedom as ordinary citizens, at least so to regulate their home life that it might

resemble as far as possible that of a hermit or a nun. The Port Royalist movement, which began with the conventual reforms introduced by the Abbess Angélique Arnauld, led to a spiritual revival over wide areas of the Church in France. Persecution was endured by the leaders with a calm dignity which won the reluctant admiration of their foes. The Abbé de Saint Cyran, first of the confessors or directors of the religious community, was imprisoned for a time in the Castle of Vincennes. Many of his counsels to his penitents refer to the duty of private prayer. "We are commanded," he wrote, "to ask God for daily bread—that is, His Grace—only every day, but I should wish to ask Him for it every hour. A Christian soul needs an unparalleled and universal flexibility. It ought to know how to pass from rest to labour, from labour to rest: from prayer to action, from action to prayer: loving nothing, cleaving to nothing: able to do everything, and able also to do nothing when sickness or obedience stays it—remaining useless with peace and joy. For there is an advantage also, in cessation from work; and often enough, while we are working, we are in God's sight doing nothing."<sup>1</sup>

M. de Sericourt once asked St. Cyran to be taught how to pray. "St. Cyran answered more by actions than in words," narrates Lancelot; "he only clasped his hands, cast down his head somewhat, and raising his hands towards God, said, 'This is all we have to do; we only need to come humbly before God, and think ourselves too happy in that He looks down upon us.'"<sup>2</sup> To

<sup>1</sup> Ch. Beard, "Port Royal," vol. i, p. 140.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176.

pass one's time in counting and bemoaning one's little faults is, he said, "Like a child who has tumbled down, and who, instead of getting up again and running on, stops to cry and look at its dirty hands: an amusement which keeps it back much more than the fall itself."

The Solitaries of Port Royal set before themselves St. Paul's injunction, "Pray without ceasing," as a constant object of desire. "In the word 'prayer' were included not only the spoken wishes of the soul, but also its silent aspirations and habitual desire of God's presence."

Charles Henry de Luzanci, who joined the brotherhood before the age of twenty, and laboured in its service for forty years, was remarkable, even among these pious men, for his assiduity in prayer. "'His delight,' says his epitaph, 'was in prayer, which was his occupation when at leisure, his consolation when at work'; and it was noticed that as he rode about the estates on the business of his stewardship, his lips were constantly moving in silent devotion."

Dr. Hamon, the beloved physician of Port Royal, held himself at the service of the poor, and was well known in the villages around.

"At first he made all his journeys on foot, taking his Bible with him; afterwards, when so long a round was too much for his failing strength, he went on his errand of mercy, mounted on an ass, and still reading his Bible, which rested on a little desk fitted into a hole in the saddle." He attached a high importance to prayer, as a necessary accompaniment to the exercise of his art.

"Thus," he says, "I always had recourse to God, quietly saying to Him in the midst of my rounds 'Except the Lord heal the sick, both they who cure and they who are cured, labour in vain.' To which I added this passage of Scripture, which is of infinite value, 'For it is neither herb nor mollifying ointment that restored them to health, but Thy Word, O Lord, which healeth all things.' And then I ended with these words, 'Thou alone art the Physician, with whose care no man dies, without whose care no man lives.' "

Sébastien Le Nain de Tillemont, to whose "Ecclesiastical History" Gibbon refers with admiration and gratitude, died in his sixty-first year at Paris in 1698. His course on earth was "one noiseless round of study and of prayer." "His life had been very still; listen to the words in which he anticipates a rapturous silence as the true bliss of heaven: 'If this inner piety which is peculiar to the Christian religion could be perfect in this life, it might perhaps produce a worship and an adoration wholly inward and spiritual like that of the angels. But that which it cannot do now, it will one day do in heaven, where the saints will ceaselessly adore and praise God in divine songs which love will form in their hearts, with no interruption by a tumult of voices and transitory corporeal sounds, since there will be nothing there but what is immutable and eternal. There, being filled with God Himself and enjoying His truth by a contemplation full of light and warmth, we shall sing His praises, not in syllables which pass away before they are



heard and words as imperfect as the faith which produces them is obscure, but in a silence worthy of His greatness. All the passions which now tear us in pieces by so many different desires, all the various created objects which give us so many distractions in prayer, so many imaginations and thoughts caused by the mobility and lightness of our spirits, all this will be silent then. Nothing will interrupt our silence ; and our soul, all at one with itself, or rather with God, by a happiness which is the opposite of that outer darkness with which Jesus Christ threatens His enemies, will see only God, will hear only God, will enjoy only God, in short, will love only God. This is the happiness which God promises to us. This is the secrecy and silence towards which faith causes the soul which it animates to aspire : and which it enables it, as it were, to anticipate by continual groanings of heart. ‘ Give us, O God, this inner piety which will produce in us both prayer and all other outward actions of virtue, and which will end in that eternal praise which our hearts will render to Thee in heaven, amidst the silence of all created things.’ ”<sup>1</sup>

Isaac de Saci, whose translation of the Bible was partly made while he was a prisoner in the Bastille, knew from his own experience of suffering how to console the afflicted. “ When I am sick,” he said, “ I do not ask God for patience to carry me through the whole day : in the morning I am content to ask it for the forenoon, at noon for the afternoon, at evening for the night.”

<sup>1</sup> Ch. Beard, “ Port Royal,” vol. ii, pp. 187, 188.

The most illustrious name connected with Port Royal is that of Blaise Pascal, with which must ever be associated that of his sister Jacqueline. In 1646, when the young mathematician was living in his father's house at Rouen, an accident to the elder Pascal brought the family into personal touch with two accomplished surgeons and bone-setters who professed the Jansenist faith. They remained in the house three months, and as a result of their teachings an impulse was given which determined the destiny of the family. Six years later, Jacqueline entered Port Royal as a novice, and in December 1654, at the age of thirty-one, Blaise "exchanged the free gaiety of his life in Paris for the austere solitudes of Port Royal des Champs." Biographers write of his first and second conversions. The dangerous illness of his sister, Madame Perier, opened his eyes to the vanity of worldly things, while tradition records an almost miraculous escape from death in a carriage accident as the precursor of that mysterious "vision" that took place on November 23, 1654. "After Pascal's death, a servant discovered a little parcel, carefully stitched up in his waistcoat, which he had evidently worn from day to day, and sewn and unsewn when he changed his clothes. The packet contained two copies of a document in his own handwriting, one on parchment, the other on paper: plainly a record of some event or train of meditation which he wished to keep ever in remembrance." From the copy, preserved by the care of Madame Perier, we translate these words, which follow after the date :

“From about half-past ten in the evening  
until about half-past twelve.

Fire

God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob,

Not of the philosophers, and learned men.

Certitude, certitude, feelings, sight, joy, peace.

God of Jesus Christ.

*My God and your God. John xx. 17.*

Thy God shall be my God. *Ruth.*

Forgetfulness of the world and of everything  
except God.

He is found only by the ways taught in the Gospel.

Greatness of the human soul

Righteous Father, the world hath not known

thee, but I have known Thee. *John xvii.*

Joy, joy, tears of joy.

I have separated myself from Him.

*They have forsaken Me the fountain of living  
waters.<sup>1</sup>*

My God, will you leave me ?

*Let me not be separated from Him eternally.*

*This is life eternal, that they may know*

*Thee, the only true God, and Him whom*

*Thou hast sent.*

*Jesus Christ,*

*Jesus Christ,*

*Jesus Christ.*

*I have separated my self from Him. I have fled  
from Him, renounced Him.*

Crucified

*Let me never be parted from Him.*

<sup>1</sup> Jeremiah ii. 13

*God can be possessed only by the ways taught in the Gospel.*

*Entire and sweet reconciliation.*

*Total submission to Jesus Christ and to my director.*

Eternally in joy in return for one day of trial on earth.

I will not forget Thy word.<sup>1</sup> Amen.

The closing years of Pascal's life were a painful and constant struggle against ill-health. Maladies caused originally by overwork had afflicted him from youth, and they were aggravated by his severe mortifications. "His whole time was spent in prayer and in reading the Scriptures." He wandered from church to church in Paris, shunning even the society of persons who sought from him religious counsel. "He regarded even such intercourse with the world as a possible snare. After his death, it was discovered that he had worn next his skin an iron girdle, studded with spikes, which he was wont to press close with his elbow, whenever some real or fancied temptation presented itself in the midst of his pious discourse."

He died at the age of thirty-nine, in his sister's home in Paris.<sup>2</sup> His last wish had been that he might be carried to the Hospital for Incurables, that he might die among the poor.

<sup>1</sup> Psalm cxix. 16. Pascal dearly loved this Psalm.

<sup>2</sup> August 19, 1662.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### SCOTTISH COVENANTERS

JOHN HILL BURTON speaks of the association with special places that marks the devotional literature of the Scottish Covenanters. These men and women suffered cruel persecution for their religion in the reigns of Charles II and James II. Dr. Hill Burton quotes the words of an old writer, "O what shall I speak to the commendation of these Covenants. If they were then glorious and bright, I believe that they shall be nine times as bright. And O the sweet times of covenanting I had likewise at communion in those days when the Church was in her purity and the Lord shined on her; and in other places at the preaching of His Word, which I cannot now tell over, being past my memory. But the back-looking to them now and then does not a little refresh my soul, as at Lochenkitt and Shallochburn, where, besides the sweet manifestations of Himself to my soul and the souls of many others then present, He was seen to be a wall of fire round about us, defending us from our enemies."

The wild, perilous life of the Covenanters as dwellers out of doors, "encountered as it was on grounds of high principle, and not in pursuit of some clownish occupation, appears," says Dr. Hill Burton, "to have made them singularly



susceptible to the topical association which is so distinct a feature of meditative minds.”<sup>1</sup>

For proof of the historian’s words we need not go farther than the narratives of Patrick Walker,<sup>2</sup> edited by Dr. Hay Fleming with ample notes. The devout pedlar speaks of “known places,” where Psalms had been heard from the lips of shadowy ‘multitudes assembled on the braesides.

Dr. Hay Fleming quotes these words of gratitude for the Divine mercy from the personal covenant of John Clark, a Galloway friend of Alexander Peden :

“Many a time didst Thou deliver me remarkably in these my wanderings ; and particularly in the wood of Cardoness, how didst Thou then hide and cover several of us, in a cave together, from a narrow search of the cruel enemy, they going over our heads. For several years together, I being destitute of any settled residence, being by enemies expelled from the place of my nativity, and cast among strangers ; yet how wonderfully didst Thou provide for me both in meat and clothing.”

### JOHN BROWN OF PRIESTHILL

Among the martyr-saints of the Covenant a place of honour belongs to John Brown of Priesthill. Alexander Peden performed the marriage ceremony when “that singular Christian” was wedded to Isabel Weir. After marriage, as Patrick Walker tells us, he said to the bride,

<sup>1</sup> “History of Scotland,” vol. vii, p. 468 (note).

<sup>2</sup> “Six Saints of the Covenant” (2 vols.).

“Isabel, you have got a good man to be your husband, but you will not enjoy him long ; prize his company, and keep linen by you to be his winding-sheet, for you will need it when you are not looking for it, and it will be a bloody one.” John Brown, as Wodrow tells us, had a small bit of land in the parish of Muirkirk, “and was a carrier in his employment, and was ordinarily called the Christian carrier. . . . He was of shining piety, and had great measures of solid digested knowledge and experience, and had a singular talent of a most plain and affecting way of communicating his knowledge to others.”

In the beginning of May 1685, Alexander Peden visited Priesthill, and stayed all night with the Browns. “In the morning,” says Patrick Walker, “when he took his farewell, he came out at the door saying to himself, ‘Poor woman, a fearful morning,’ twice over, ‘a dark misty morning.’ The next morning, between five and six hours, the said John Brown, having performed the worship of God in his family, was going with a spade in his hand to make ready some peat-ground ; the mist being very dark, he knew not until bloody cruel Claverhouse compassed him with three troops of horses, brought him to his house, and there examined him ; who, tho’ he was a man of a stammering speech, yet answered him distinctly and solidly ; which made Claverhouse to examine those whom he had taken to be his guides thorow the muirs, if ever they heard him preach ; they answered, ‘No, no, he was never a preacher.’ He said, ‘If he has never preached, meikle has he prayed in his time.’

He said to John, 'Go to your prayers, for you shall immediately die.' When he was praying, Claverhouse interrupted him three times. One time that he stopt him, he was pleading that the Lord would spare a remnant, and not make a full end in the day of His anger. Claverhouse said, 'I gave you time to pray, and ye're begun to preach'; he turned about on his knees, and said, 'Sir, you know neither the nature of preaching nor praying, that calls this preaching'; then continued without confusion. When ended, Claverhouse said, 'Take goodnight of your wife and children.' His wife standing by, with her child in her arms that she had brought forth to him, and another child of his first wife's, he came to her and said, 'Now, Isabel, the day is come that I told you would come, when I spake first to you of marrying me.' She said, 'Indeed, John, I can willingly part with you.' Then he said, 'That's all I desire, I have no more to do but die, I have been in case to meet with death for so many years.' He kissed his wife and bairns, and wished purchased and promised blessings to be multiplied upon them, and his blessing.

"Claverhouse ordered six soldiers to shoot him : the most of the bullets came upon his head, which scattered his brains upon the ground. Claverhouse said to his wife, 'What thinkest thou of thy husband now, woman?' She said, 'I thought ever much good of him, and as much now as ever.' He said, 'It were but justice to lay thee beside him.' She said, 'If ye were permitted, I doubt not but your cruelty would go that length; but how will ye make answer for

this morning's work ? ' He said, ' To man I can be answerable ; and for God, I will take Him in my own hand.' Claverhouse mounted his horse, and marched, and left her with the corpse of her dead husband lying there ; she set the bairn upon the ground, and gathered his brains, and tied up his head, and straighted his body, and covered him with her plaid, and sat down and wept over him."

Patrick Walker records many prayers of " Peden the Prophet," whose personality stands out more distinctly perhaps than that of any other Covenanting hero. Peden had no terrors for himself, but by some strange instinct he knew when the persecuting enemies were drawing near to his friends. On one occasion the party " went eastward, somewhat contrair to his inclination ; they came to the top of an hill upwards of two miles distant from the house to which they designed. He halted, and said, ' I will not go one foot further this way ; there is undoubtedly danger before us.' An herd-lad being there, he gave him a groat, and desired him to go to that house and fetch them meat and news. When the lad came to the house, the good-wife hasted, and gave him meat to them, saying, ' Lad, run hard, and tell them that the enemies are spread, and we are every minute looking for them here.' As the lad was going from the house, eighteen of the enemy's foot were near, crying, ' Stand, dog.' The lad ran, and six of them pursued half a mile, and fired hard upon him ; the ball went close by his head. All that time, Mr. Peden continued in prayer for him his alone, and with the rest,



being twelve men, when praying with them, he said, 'Lord, shall the poor lad that's gone our errand, seeking bread to support our lives, lose his? Direct the bullets by his head, however near, let them not touch him; Good Lord, spare the lap of Thy cloak, and cover the poor lad.' And in this he was heard and answered, in that there was a dark cloud of mist parted him and them."<sup>1</sup>

We have the authority of Patrick Walker, also, for the following narrative of Peden:

"After this, in Auchengrooch muirs in Nithsdale, Captain John Matthison and others being with him, they were alarmed that the enemies were coming fast upon them; they designed to put him [Peden] in some hole and cover him with heather, he not being able to run hard by reason of age. He desired them to forbear a little until he prayed, where he said, 'Lord, we are ever needing at Thy hand; and if we had not Thy command to call on Thee in the day of our trouble, and Thy promise of answering us in the day of our distress, we wot not what would become of us. If Thou have any more work for us in Thy world, allow us the lap of Thy cloak this day again; and if this be the day of our going off the stage, let us win honestly off and comfortably thorow, and our souls will sing forth Thy praises to eternity, for what Thou hast done to us and for us.' When ended, he ran his alone a little and came quickly back, saying, 'Lads, the bitterest of this blast is over; we'll be no more troubled with them to-day.' Foot and horse came the

<sup>1</sup> "Six Saints of the Covenant," vol. i, pp. 72, 73.



length of Andrew Clark's in Auchengrooch, where they were covered with a dark mist ; when they saw it, they roared like fleshly devils, as they were, crying out, ' There's the confounded mist again, we cannot get these damned Whigs pursued for it.' I had this account from the said Captain John Matthison."

Peden used this prayer in the Collomwood, at the water of Air, a little before his death :

" Lord, Thou hast been both good and kind to old Sandy thorow a long tract of time, and given him many years in Thy service, which have been but as so many months ; but now he's tyr'd of Thy world, and hath done the good in it that he will do ; let him win away with the honesty he has, for he will gather no more."<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Hay Fleming quotes the testimony of Sergeant Nisbet on Peden : " I observed that every time he spoke, whether conversing, reading, praying, or preaching, between every sentence he paused a little, as if he had been hearkening what the Lord would say unto him, or listening to some secret whisper. And sometimes he would start, as if he had seen some surprising sight."

Patrick Walker tells us that John Semple, one of the Covenanting divines, was " much given to secret prayer, and ordinarily prayed in the kirk before the sacramental occasions, because the kirk was more retired than the manse. He set apart the Friday for wrestling with his Master for His gracious presence on the Communion Sabbath ; and he being favoured with merciful

<sup>1</sup> " Six Saints of the Covenant," vol. i, p. 95.

returns, to the great comfort of both ministers and people, he appointed a weekday for thanksgiving to God."

Some of Mr. Semple's flock "became eminent Christians, and were endued with the grace of prayer; of whom Mr. Peden used to say that they had moyen at the court of heaven beyond many Christian professors of religion he knew."

John Semple was very regular in attending the meetings of Presbytery, though his home at Carsphern was twenty-four miles distant from the Presbytery's seat at Kirkcudbright. "When he was going to the foord in the water of Dee, in his way to the Presbytery, he would not be hindered from riding the water, tho' he was told by some that the water was unpassible, saying, 'I must get through if the Lord will, I am going about His work.' He entered in, and the strength of water carried him and his horse beneath the foord; he fell from his horse, and stood up in the water, and taking off his hat prayed a word to this purpose, 'Lord, art Thou in earnest to drown me, Thy poor servant, who would fain go Thy errands?' After which, he and his horse got both safely out, to the admiration of all onlookers."

The Covenanting leader, Richard Cameron, fought and died at Airds-Moss, a very desert place. When the enemy surprised the little company, and they drew about the hero, "he prayed a short word, and had these expressions three times, 'Lord, spare the green, and take the ripe.' When ended, he said to his brother, 'Michael, come, let us fight it out to the last, for

this is the day that I have longed for, and the death that I have prayed for, to die fighting against our Lord's avowed enemies ; and this is the day that we will get the crown.' And to the rest he said, ' Be encouraged, all of you, to fight it out valiantly ; for all of you that shall fall this day I see heaven's gates cast wide open to receive them.' " Patrick Walker tells, further, that the eight that died with Cameron on the spot were ripe, " and longing for that day and death."

Another stalwart of that earlier Church, Mr. Welsh, minister of Ayr, " used to frequent his garden in the night-time, to wrestle with God by prayer for the people under his charge." " When challenged by his wife for being so unmerciful to his body, he answered, ' 'Tis otherwise with me than with you ; for I have the charge of three thousand souls whom I must answer for, and know not how it may be with many of them.' " <sup>1</sup>

Of the Covenanting martyr, Donald<sup>2</sup> Cargill, Patrick Walker writes : " From his youth he was much given to secret prayer, yea, whole nights ; and it was observed by some, both in families and when in secret, he always sat straight upon his knees, without resting upon anything, with his hands lifted up, and some took notice he died the same way with the bloody rope about his neck."

We may close this chapter with a passage which, though it belongs to the year 1645 and to an earlier generation than that of which Patrick Walker writes, represents a scene that was often repeated, we may be sure, in that troubled century.

<sup>1</sup> " Six Saints of the Covenant," vol. i, p. 274. <sup>2</sup> Or Daniel.

In Neil Munro's novel, "John Splendid," when the hero, his friend McIver, and Mr. Gordon, the minister of Inverary, take shelter with others in the house of Dalness, McIver speaks of keeping "a man-about watch against intrusion." "There's a watch more pressing still," said Master Gordon, shaking the slumber off him and jogging the sleeping men upon the shoulders. 'My soul watcheth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning. We have been wet with the showers of the mountain, like Job, and embracing the rock for want of a shelter. We are lone-haunted men in a wild land encompassed by enemies ; let us thank God for our safety thus far, and ask His continued shield upon our flight.'

"And in the silence of that great house, dripping and rocking in the tempest of the night, the minister poured out his heart in prayer. It had humility and courage too ; it was imbued with a spirit strong and calm. For the first time my spirit warmed to the man who in years after was my friend and mentor—Alexander Gordon, Master of the Arts, the man who wedded me and gave my children Christian baptism, and brought solace in the train of those little ones lost for a space to me among the grasses and flowers of Kilmalieu."

## CHAPTER XXV

### THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY : GENERAL NOTES

THE eighteenth century is often regarded as a time of spiritual drought, yet few ages have been more fruitful in the history of prayer. The Methodist Revival alone carried with it an extension of private devotion among the common people which recalls the words of St. John of the Cross in one of his best-known lyrics :

“ How well I know the spring that freely flows,  
Although 'tis night.

“ That spring of endless joy is hid from sight,  
But well I know the abode of its delight  
Although 'tis night.” <sup>1</sup>

William Law says of Miranda, his model of a Christian gentlewoman : “ Every morning sees her early at her prayers ; she rejoices in the beginning of every day, because it begins all her pious rules of holy living, and brings the fresh pleasure of repeating them. She seems to be as

<sup>1</sup> “ Que bien sé yo la fuente que mana y corre  
Aunque es de noche.

“ Aquella eterna fuente está escondida.  
Que bien sé yo do tiene su manida,  
Aunque es de noche.”

The translation is by Prof. Allison Peers in his book, “ Studies of the Spanish Mystics ” (1927).



a guardian angel to those that dwell about her, with her watchings and prayers, blessing the place where she dwells, and making intercession with God for those that are asleep. Her devotions have had some intervals, and God has heard several of her private prayers, before the light is suffered to enter into her sister's room. Miranda does not know what it is to have a dull half-day ; the returns of her hours of prayer, and her religious exercises, come too often to let any considerable part of it lie heavy upon her hands.”<sup>1</sup>

Henry Grey Graham, in “The Social Life of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century,”<sup>2</sup> writes of “the awe, the fear, the spiritual strivings with which pious people regarded their presence at Communion.”

“One of the most singular features of those days,” he says, “was the custom prevailing amongst persons of severe cast of mind of making self-dedications, which they wrote down and renewed year by year. The usual time for making these ‘covenants’ or ‘trysts’ was on the eve of a communion. Each time they are about ‘to approach the tabell of the Lord’ they subscribe anew their ‘espousals with Christ,’ in which they dispose to His service their lives, their children, their earthly goods. As they wrote those bonds in their little chambers, there being no mortals present to be witnesses of them, some of these devout Christians solemnly declare how they appeal to angels above and objects of nature below to testify to their vows, as Joshua called on the rocks of Shechem. Leaning on his closet bed,

<sup>1</sup> “A Serious Call,” ch. viii. <sup>2</sup> Pp. 305–307 (edition of 1906).

Mr. Thomas Boston takes the several quarters of the wooden bed to witness that he 'has gone under a covenant of blood.' One worthy man relates how 'I went my lone into a wood and I covenanted away myself, my bairns, and theirs to all generations, and took the place I was sitting in, and the trees, and the heavens, and angells, and God Himself that knew my heart, witnesses that we should be for Him and not for another, without any reserve in body, goods, and soul. On the back of this I had such joy and peace in believing as I cannot express, and came home next day rejoicing.' . . . Some of these pious wills and testaments still exist in family archives. . . . The ink is now yellow and dim; the rough paper is brown with age; the vows are expressed in quaint phrase and quaint penmanship, strange specimens of exquisite feeling and atrocious spelling. One can see in the antique manuscripts how, as years went by, the signatures grow more shaky from infirmity and old age, and the strokes of the pen become veritable paralytic strokes; yet abating no whit of ancient devotion for the long period of maybe forty years."

Mr. Graham wrote of Scottish open-air Communion services in the eighteenth century: "Even the long drawn-out psalm tunes, although broken by each line being read out and sung in turn, rose plaintive and sweet from a throng of voices; and the prayers, with their earnest weeping pleading, came forth in a stillness broken only by sudden sighs and ejaculations, or the sharp cry of the curlew in the heather, and the song of the lark overhead."

The foremost English man of letters in that century was Dr. Samuel Johnson. From his life and writings we know that he was a man of prayer. When he visited Edinburgh in August 1773, the first book he chose from Boswell's shelves was Ogden's "Sermons on Prayer," which accompanied the travellers on their journey northwards. He talked with Dr. William Robertson on this volume. "The same arguments which are used against God's hearing prayer," said Johnson, "will serve against His rewarding good and punishing evil. He has resolved, He has declared, in the former case as in the latter."

On the words of Hesiod :

"Let youth in deeds, in counsel man engage,  
Prayer is the proper duty of old age,"

he remarked : "That is a very noble line : not that young men should not pray, or old men not give counsel, but that every season of life has its proper duties."<sup>1</sup>

To his aged mother, in the month of her death, Johnson wrote, "I pray often for you ; do you pray for me ?" He approached the subject of prayer with tenderness and awe. When he went with Boswell to Harwich, to see his young friend off for Holland, they went and looked at the church. "Having gone into it and walked up to the altar, Johnson, whose piety was constant and fervent, sent me to my knees, saying, 'Now that you

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Bardo's words on this passage in "Romola," ch. xii : "But what says the Greek ? 'In the morning of life, work ; in the midday, give counsel ; in the evening, pray.' It is true, I might be thought to have reached that helpless evening ; but not so, while I have counsel within me which is yet unspoken."

are going to leave your native country, recommend yourself to the protection of your Creator and Redeemer.' ”

His “Prayers and Meditations” contain many passages of the most searching self-examination. In 1764 he wrote, “I have now spent fifty-five years in resolving, having, from the earliest time almost that I can remember, been forming schemes of a better life. I have done nothing. The need of doing, therefore, is pressing, since the time of doing is short. O God, grant me to resolve aright, and to keep my resolutions, for Jesus Christ’s sake, Amen.”

When he thought himself alone, Johnson “was frequently uttering pious ejaculations; for fragments of the Lord’s Prayer have been distinctly overheard.”

Perhaps the best-known of his prayers is that which he wrote in his private register at the age of sixty-seven :

“*July 25, 1776.* O God who has ordained that whatever is to be desired should be sought by labour, and who, by Thy blessing, bringest honest labour to good effect, look with mercy upon my studies and endeavours. Grant me, O Lord, to design only what is lawful and right; and afford me calmness of mind and steadiness of purpose, that I may so do Thy will in this short life, as to obtain happiness in the world to come, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

“It appears,” says Boswell, “from a note subjoined, that this was composed when he ‘purposed to apply vigorously to study, particularly of the Greek and Italian tongues.’ ”



Boswell tells us, on the authority of Mr. John Nichols, that when Dr. Johnson was dying, it was his regular practice to have the Church service read to him, by some attentive and friendly divine. "The Rev. Mr. Hoole," wrote Mr. Nichols, "performed this kind office in my presence for the last time, when, by his own desire, no more than the Litany was read ; in which his responses were in the deep and sonorous voice which Mr. Boswell has occasionally noticed, and with the most profound devotion that can be imagined. His hearing not being quite perfect, he more than once interrupted Mr. Hoole with, 'Louder, my dear sir, louder, I entreat you, or you pray in vain !' and when the service was ended, he, with great earnestness, turned round to an excellent lady who was present, saying, 'I thank you, madam, very heartily, for joining me in this solemn exercise. Live well, I entreat you ; and you will not feel the compunction at the last, which I now feel.'"

Eleven years earlier, on Good Friday 1773, Dr. Johnson carried Boswell to service at St. Clement Danes. "His behaviour," says the biographer, "was, as I had imaged to myself, solemnly devout. I never shall forget the tremendous earnestness with which he pronounced the awful petition in the Litany, 'In the hour of death, and at the day of judgment, good Lord deliver us.'"

A contemporary of Johnson, the famous naturalist, Thomas Bewick, tells us in his "Memoir" that when he went in 1767 at the age of fourteen to be apprenticed at Newcastle, his father



accompanied him on the journey, and talked to him earnestly about religion. "He begged I would never omit, morning and evening, addressing myself to my Maker, and said that if I ceased to do so, then he believed and feared every evil would follow."

For the later years of the century we take a passage from Quaker records. One of the friends whom Burke welcomed most cordially at Beaconsfield was Richard Shackleton, the companion of his boyhood. Shackleton told us, says Lord Morley, how the cordiality and openness with which Burke embraced him was even more than might be expected from long love. "The simple Quaker was confused by the sight of what seemed to him so sumptuous and worldly a life, and he went to rest uneasily, doubting whether God's blessing could go with it. But when he awoke on the morrow of his first visit, he told his wife, in the language of his sect, how glad he was to find 'no condemnation; but on the contrary, ability to put up fervent petitions with much tenderness on behalf of this great luminary.'"

## CHAPTER XXVI

JOHN WESLEY <sup>1</sup>

THE secret of Wesley's victories in the inner and the outer world is disclosed, says Dr. Eayrs, in his Diaries and Letters. "It was prayer and communion with God. Among his early resolves were these: 'To dedicate an hour, morning and evening; No Excuse, Reason, or Pretence; To pray, every hour, seriously, deliberately, fervently.' We can trace his frequent, almost literal, fulfilment of these vows. Alike in years as far apart as 1738 and 1782, day after day, the first item in the almost hourly record is 'Prayed.' It recurs four, six, or more times, and it closes the busy day's account. The other frequent item is 'Singing.' On some days he sang eight times."

To his brother Samuel, Wesley wrote at the age of thirty-five a letter in which he refers to the transforming experience that had come to him five months earlier at the Aldersgate Street service on May 24, 1738. "It is scarcely an exaggeration," remarks Lecky, the historian of that century, "to say that the scene which took place at that humble meeting in Aldersgate Street forms an epoch in English history." The letter

<sup>1</sup> I gratefully acknowledge help received for this chapter from two books which were given me by their editors: "John Wesley's Journal," abridged by Percy Livingstone Parker (1902); and "Letters of John Wesley," edited by Dr. George Eayrs (1915).

includes this passage : “ If you ask by what means I am made free (though not perfect, neither infallibly sure of my perseverance) I answer, By faith in Christ ; by such a sort or degree of faith as I had not till that day. My desire of that faith I knew long before, though not so clearly till Sunday, January the 8th last, when, being in the midst of the great deep, I wrote a few lines in the bitterness of my soul, some of which I have transcribed ; and may the good God sanctify them both to you and me.

“ ‘ By the most infallible of all proofs, inward feeling, I am convinced—

“ ‘ (1) Of unbelief ; having no such faith in Christ as will prevent my heart being troubled ; which it could not be if I believed in God, and rightly believed also in Him :

“ ‘ (2) Of pride throughout my past life ; inso-much I thought I had what I find I had not. Lord, save me, or I perish ! Save me (i) By such a faith in Thee and in Thy Christ as implies trust, confidence, peace in life and death. (ii) By such humility as may fill my heart from this hour for ever with a piercing, interrupted sense, *nihil est quod hactenus feci*,<sup>1</sup> having evidently built without a foundation. (iii) By such a recollection that I may cry to Thee every moment, but more especially when all is calm (if it should so please Thee) “ Give me faith or I die ! Give me a lowly spirit, otherwise *mihi non sit suave vivere.* ” ”<sup>2</sup>

In one of his letters to the banker, Ebenezer Blackwell, Wesley wrote : “ I find the engaging,

<sup>1</sup> “ What I have hitherto done amounts to nothing.”

<sup>2</sup> “ May life itself no longer be pleasant to me.”

though but a little, in these temporal affairs is apt to damp and deaden the soul, and there is no remedy but continual prayer. What, then, but the mighty power of God can keep your soul alive, who are engaged all the day long with such a multiplicity of them? It is well that His grace is sufficient for you. But do you not find need to pray always? And if you cannot always say—

“‘ My hands are but employ’d below,  
My heart is still with Thee,’

is there not the more occasion for some season of solemn retirement (if it were possible, every day) wherein you may withdraw your mind from earth, and even the accounts between God and your own soul?”

In a letter which is thought to have been addressed to Mrs. Crosby, these words are found: “Whereunto you have attained, hold fast. You need never let it go. Nothing is more certain than that God is willing to give always what He gives once. If therefore He now gives you power to yield to Him your whole heart, you may confidently expect the continuance of that power till your spirit returns to God: provided you continue watching unto prayer, denying yourself, and taking up your cross daily. Only beware of evil reasoning! Hang upon Him that loves you as a little child; living *to-day*, and trusting Him for *to-morrow*.”

On his voyage to Georgia in 1735, Wesley and his companions laid out every hour to the best advantage. On the day when the “Simmonds” left Gravesend he wrote in his “Journal,” “We

now began to be a little regular. Our common way of living was this : From four in the morning till five each of us used private prayer. From five to seven we read the Bible together, carefully comparing it (that we might not lean to our own understandings) with the writings of the earliest ages. At seven we breakfasted. At eight were the public prayers. From nine to twelve I usually learned German, and Mr. Delamotte Greek. My brother writ sermons, and Mr. Ingham instructed the children. At twelve we met to give an account to one another what we had done since our last meeting, and what we designed to do before our next. About one we dined. The time from dinner to four we spent in reading to those whom each of us had taken in charge; or in speaking to them severally, as need required. At four were the evening prayers ; when either the second lesson was explained (as it always was in the morning), or the children were catechised and instructed before the congregation. From five to six we again used private prayer. From six to seven I read in our cabin to two or three of the passengers (of whom there were about eighty English on board), and each of my brethren to a few more in theirs." A further service with the Germans followed, and the strenuous day closed " between nine and ten."

Wesley's habit of constant prayer is nowhere more evident than in the most famous passage of his Journal. On Wednesday, May 24, 1738, he wrote a few paragraphs which are indeed " the precious life-blood of a master-spirit." " I think it was about five this morning," he says, " that



I opened my Testament on those words, 'There are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, even that we should be partakers of the divine nature' (2 Peter i. 4). Just as I went out, I opened it again on those words, 'Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.' In the afternoon I was asked to go to St. Paul's. The anthem was, 'Out of the deep have I called unto Thee, O Lord : Lord, hear my voice. O let Thine ears consider well the voice of my complaint. If Thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who may abide it? For there is mercy with Thee ; therefore shalt Thou be feared. O Israel, trust in the Lord : for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his sins.' In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate-street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation ; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death. I began to pray with all might for those who had in a more especial manner despitely used me and persecuted me. I then testified openly to all there what I now first felt in my heart. But it was not long before the enemy suggested, 'This cannot be faith ; for where is thy joy?' Then was I taught that peace and victory over sin are essential to faith in the Captain of our

salvation ; but that, as to the transports of joy that usually attend the beginning of it, especially in those who have mourned deeply, God sometimes giveth, sometimes withholdeth them, according to the counsels of His own will.

“After my return home, I was much buffeted with temptations ; but cried out and they fled away. They returned again and again. I as often lifted up my eyes and ‘He sent me help from His holy place.’”

On the following day, he added, “The moment I awaked, ‘Jesus, Master,’ was in my heart and my mouth ; and I found all my strength lay in keeping my eye fixed upon Him, and my soul waiting on Him continually.”

There are gleams of beauty in his brief references to the meditations of his solitary rides. “I had a solemn and delightful ride to Keswick, having my mind stayed on God.”

On Sunday, June 28, 1789, he wrote in his “Journal” : “This day I enter on my eighty-sixth year. I now find I grow old ; 1. My sight is decayed ; so that I cannot read a small print, unless in a strong light. 2. My strength is decayed ; so that I walk much slower than I did some years since. 3. My memory of names, whether of persons or places, is decayed ; till I stop a little to recollect them. What I should be afraid of, is, if I took thought for the morrow, that my body should weigh down my mind ; and create either stubbornness, by the decrease of my understanding ; or peevishness, by the increase of bodily infirmities : but Thou shalt answer for me, O Lord my God.”

Two years later, we have this confession : “ For above eighty-six years I found none of the infirmities of old age ; my eyes did not wax dim, neither was my natural strength abated ; but last August I found almost a sudden change. My eyes were so dim that no glasses would help me. My strength likewise quite forsook me ; and probably will not return in this world. But I feel no pain from head to foot ; only it seems nature is exhausted ; and, humanly speaking, will sink more and more, till—

*‘ The weary springs of life stand still at last. ’ ”*

Those who ministered to him in his last hours heard his voice raised in solemn petitions. Betsy Ritchie, one of the saints of early Methodism, has these words in her narrative of the closing scenes : “ When he got into his chair, we saw him change for death ; but he, regardless of his dying frame, said, with a weak voice, ‘ Lord, Thou givest strength to those that can speak, and to those that cannot : Speak, Lord, to all our hearts, and let them know that Thou loosest tongues. ’ He then sang :

*‘ To Father, Son and Holy Ghost,  
Who sweetly all agree. ’*

Here his voice failed him, and after gasping for breath, he said, ‘ Now we have done—let us all go. ’ We were obliged to lay him down on the bed from which he rose no more ; but after lying still, and sleeping a little, he called me to him ; and said, ‘ Betsy, you Mr. Bradford etc., pray and praise. ’ We knelt down, and truly our

hearts were filled with the Divine presence ; the room seemed to be filled with God."

Near the end, "finding we could not understand what he said, he paused a little, and then with all the remaining strength he had, cried out, 'The best of all is, God is with us':—and then, as if to assert the faithfulness of our promise-keeping Jehovah and comfort the hearts of his weeping friends, lifting up his dying arm in token of victory, and raising his feeble voice with a holy triumph not to be expressed, again repeated the heart-reviving words, 'The best of all is, God is with us!'"

## CHAPTER XXVII

BISHOP THOMAS WILSON

THE author of the "Sacra Privata," whose holy and useful life was extended into his ninety-third year, was born on the fourth Sunday of Advent, 1663, at Burton in Cheshire. The village stands on the Dee, about eight miles from Chester, and it is thought that the future Bishop's father was engaged in farming. "It has pleased God," wrote Thomas Wilson, "to call me out of a family which (though its honesty and industry, by God's blessing, has preserved it from poverty) yet is far from being rich, to a post which my own merits and prudence would never have brought me to." "'That I had an education and preferment above the abilities of my father's house'; 'that Thou hast called me to Thy *immediate* service, raised me above the level of my father's house, and continually heaped unexpected favours on me,'—these are some of his devotional topics when he is pouring out his heart in thankfulness, and keeping himself humble with the remembrance of his low estate."<sup>1</sup>

After his recovery from a dangerous illness in 1693, he wrote this thanksgiving and petition: "Since Thou didst in great mercy restore me to my former health—since Thou hast given me a

<sup>1</sup> "Life of Thomas Wilson," by John Keble, vol. i, pt. i, p. 5.



new life—give me grace likewise, without which my life will be no blessing to me ; give me grace, I humbly beg, to serve Thee with *this life*, which is Thine. Thou needst not, O God, my service, but accept of my ambition of serving Thee ; I would do something that might be acceptable to my great Benefactor. Thou desirest no sacrifice, else I would give it Thee ; I offer my life to be employed in Thy immediate service, to which I have dedicated it.”

Wilson was only in his thirty-fifth year when his patron, the Earl of Derby, offered him the Bishopric of Sodor and Man. In the “*Sacra Privata*” we read, “Forced to accept the Bishoprick of Man, Nov. 27, 1697.” His connection with the island diocese lasted fifty-eight years.

The example of his own piety reaches us in “this devout and touching sentiment”: “If Christians would but accustom themselves to render to God the glory of His mercies—to take notice of, and to give Him thanks for, the many favours, deliverances, visitations, or chastisements they every day meet with—they would most surely engage the divine goodness and providence to multiply those blessings upon them, which they put a stop to by their ingratitude.”

“Pardon,” cries Bishop Wilson, in his “*Sacra Privata*,” “that I have passed so many days without admiring, without acknowledging and confessing Thy wonderful goodness to the most unworthy of Thy servants. Preserve in my soul, O God, such a constant and clear sense of my obligations to Thee, that upon every new receipt

of Thy favour, I may immediately turn my eyes to Him from whom cometh my salvation."

Henry Corlett, who saw much of Bishop Wilson in his last year, and passed with him his ninety-first and ninety-second birthdays, used to tell with joy in his countenance of the benignity of the Bishop's behaviour, the heavenliness of his discourse, and the fervour of his prayers. "As he slept in a room adjoining the Bishop's chamber, he frequently overheard, at midnight, the orisons of the holy man. He could distinguish his whispering voice pouring forth supplications and thanksgivings to the great Preserver of men, who 'never slumbers nor sleeps.' Sometimes the words of the pious Psalmist were distinctly heard, 'I will arise at midnight and give thanks unto Thee.' 'Praise the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, praise His holy name.' Sometimes messages from the *Te Deum*, 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth! Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory.' Thus did God give His beloved servant songs in the night."<sup>1</sup>

The immediate cause of the aged saint's death was a chill caught by walking in his garden in very cold weather, after evening prayers: dying as he lived, praising God in Psalms and detached sentences of the *Te Deum*.

The "Sacra Privata" have passed through many editions, and have brought spiritual help to thousands. The late Bishop of Sodor and Man, Dr. Denton Thompson, used to show visitors the cave where Thomas Wilson spent much time in solitary prayer.

<sup>1</sup> Keble's "Life of Bishop Wilson."

## CHAPTER XXVIII

JOHN FOSTER

JOHN FOSTER, the Baptist essayist, was born in 1770 in a farm-house near Hebdenbridge, in the parish of Halifax. His father, who also bore the name of John, resembled St. Teresa's father, Alonso de Cepeda, in the grave cast of his piety, his habits of retirement, and his love of religious books. A secluded spot at the bottom of a wood near the river Hebden, with a projecting rock, whither the good man used to retire for prayer and meditation, was long known by the name of John Foster's cave. When Teresa's father was dying, he wished, with tears in his eyes, that he had only been a friar of one of the strictest Orders. The elder John Foster was withdrawn, long before his death, from worldly concerns and interests. "Before an advanced period of old age, it was at the beginning of each year his earnest desire, as far as compatible with submission to the Divine will, that it might be his last; 'so that I have no doubt,' his son observed to a friend, 'that he entered on twenty successive years with this desire expressed in prayer.'"

The younger John Foster was fascinated in

childhood, like St. Teresa, by the ideal of the hermit's life. He did not build garden-retreats, like the child of Avila, for the moor wind to sweep away, but he loved to read of Gregory Lopez, a Spanish hermit in the West Indies, who remained in absolute seclusion during the last six years of his life.

"I remember," wrote Foster in his "Essay on the Epithet Romantic," "a person, very young indeed, who was so enchanted with the stories of Gregory Lopez, and one or two more pious hermits, as almost to form the resolution to betake himself to some wilderness, and live as Gregory did. At any time the word hermit was enough to transport him, like the witch's broomstick, to the solitary hut which was delightfully surrounded by shady, solemn groves, mossy rocks, crystal streams, and gardens of radishes. While the fancy lasted he forgot the most obvious of all facts, that man is not made for habitual solitude, nor can endure it without misery, except when turned into the superstitious ascetic."<sup>1</sup>

In the earliest of Foster's Letters, which were written soon after the age of twenty from the Baptist College, Bristol, he seeks the prayers of the companion of his youth, Henry Horsfall. To his venerable pastor, Dr. Fawcett, he wrote, "I am solicitous to cultivate warm and growing piety." And again, "I often recollect

<sup>1</sup> Raymond Lull, in his Medieval romance "*Blanquerna*," remembered the fact to which Foster refers. His hero quits his parents at the age of eighteen to embrace the hermit's life, but the wood into which he enters becomes the busy stage of the world, and the would-be anchorite rises to the rank of Bishop and Pope.



Dr. Young's expression, 'Give thy mind sea-room.'"<sup>1</sup>

"Is the cell on the other side of the orchard," he asks Henry, "in a state as desolate and ruinous as it was when I saw it last? What a number of hours I have spent there! sometimes praying, sometimes attempting to study sermons."

To his friend Mrs. Mant, Foster wrote from Frome in 1807, "Let me once again exhort you, while I would admonish myself also, to be much in the exercise of making your requests known to the Almighty. It is the greatest of all consolations upon earth."

Gratitude for earthly blessings found expression in many of his letters. In the last to his mother he wrote: "What a life of providential indulgence mine has been! A life of health, a life of much favour from fellow-mortals, of never-failing temporal supplies, of innumerable intellectual and religious means and advantages, and nearly nine years of it passed in a happy domestic connection. I think I do not forget any day to be grateful to heaven for this last circumstance. My dear wife is one of the most estimable, and one of the most affectionate of her sex. I constantly feel how much she deserves to be loved, and I love her as much as in the commencement of our happy union. I often tell her fondly, how grateful I am to the Almighty that she is mine, and that she has been mine so long; only regretting, as I told

<sup>1</sup> "Give thy mind *sea-room*; keep it wide of earth,  
That rock of souls immortal; cut thy cord;  
Weigh anchor; spread thy sails; call every wind;  
Eye thy great pole-star; make the land of life."



her this morning, that she had not been mine earlier in life. But that was as Providence ordered it, and the same Providence which ordered that my early partialities should not result in the conjugal relation. From all the merciful care of that Providence during the past, I have very good cause to commit my way to the Lord for all the time that may yet be to come. In advancing into the darkness of futurity, I will humbly and gratefully trust that the Guardian and Guide of my life hitherto will 'never leave me nor forsake me.' And, the while, I hope to be found more faithful and diligent in His service."<sup>1</sup>

Like all serious thinkers, Foster dwelt much, especially in his later years, on the life beyond this world. "How welcome are these shortening days!" he says in one letter. "The precursory intimations of winter even before the summer itself is gone, and how almost frightfully rapid the vicissitudes of the seasons, telling us of the flight of time, the consumption of life, the approximation to its end. That end; that end! And there is an hour decreed for the final one. It *will* be here—it will be past. And then—that other life! that other world! Let us pray more earnestly than ever, that the *first hour after the last* may open upon us in celestial light."

And again—thinking of the beloved dead—he says: "May heaven prepare us to meet them erewhile, with ecstatic joy—joy to them, as well as to us; for with rapturous emotion, they will

<sup>1</sup> In writing these letters to his honoured mother in her extreme old age, Foster assumes that she is in full touch with his literary labours.

welcome, when they arrive, those whom they have left behind."

At the age of sixty-eight, he wrote to his friend, the Rev. Josiah Hill: "An interval of more than forty years makes all the difference between the morning of life and its evening; the mind, in the one position, occupied with imagination, conjecture, possibilities, resolutions, hopes;—in the other, looking back to see that visionary speculation reduced to the humility of an experience and reality, in which there is much to regret and much for self-reproach; and looking forward to behold, in near approach, *another* future, of how different an aspect from that presented to the youthful spirit! Here, my friend, we stand, yourself at no great distance behind me. What a solemn and mighty difference it is, that whereas we then beheld life before us, we now behold death. Oh, what cause for earnest care, and strife, and supplication to heaven; that when the moment comes, which every moment is bringing nearer, that we shall have passed that portentous shade, and behold the amazing prospect beyond it opening upon us, it may present itself under the light of the divine mercy, beaming upon us from Him who has the keys of death and the invisible world."

After his wife's death Foster wrote to his dear friend, Josiah Hill: "One of the most striking circumstances to my thought and feeling is that, in devotional exercises, though she comes on my mind in a more affecting manner than perhaps ever, *I have no longer to pray for her*. By a momentary lapse of thought I have been, I think,

several times on the point of falling into an expression for her as if still on earth ; and the instant 'No ! no more for her,' has been an emotion of pain, and as it were disappointment ; till the thought has come, '*She* needs not ; she is now safe, beyond the sphere of mortals and their dangers and wants, in the possession of all that prayer implored.' Even *after* the consolatory thought there has been a pensive trace of feeling, something like pain, that sympathy, care for her welfare, should now be superfluous to her and finally extinguished."

At the age of seventy, this Christian scholar wrote, "My daily and almost hourly prayer is, 'God be merciful to me a sinner !' "

## CHAPTER XXIX

THOMAS CHALMERS

“WE Scotsmen,” said Lord Rosebery, “do well to take every opportunity of revering and burning incense before the memory of Dr. Chalmers. For he was one of the greatest of our race: a commanding character, a superb orator, the most illustrious Scottish Churchman since John Knox. His memory remains green and vivid with us when statesmen, writers, and philosophers are, if not forgotten, languishing in the shade. It is a noble and blessed life, none more enviable.”<sup>1</sup>

Born in 1780 at Anstruther in Fife, Chalmers matriculated before the age of twelve at St. Andrews University. Five years later, as a theological student in his first year, he astonished the townspeople by the freedom and fervour of his public prayers. To a later date, when he was about nineteen, belongs the incident described by his friend, Mr. Miller. “After being very uncomfortable” in a situation as a tutor, “he left the family abruptly, and came to me at St. Andrews, in a state of great excitement and unhappiness, and lived with me during the rest of the session. His mind was at that time in a most interesting but unhappy condition. He was earnestly searching for the truth—saw some

<sup>1</sup> “Miscellanies,” vol. i, p. 238.

things very clearly and satisfactorily, but could not find his way to the understanding and belief of some of the most obvious doctrines of natural and revealed religion. Those who were not particularly acquainted with him thought him going fast into a state of derangement. One very common expression in his public prayers, which showed the state of his mind at that time — ‘Oh, give us some steady object for our mind to rest upon,’ — was uttered with all his characteristic earnestness and emphasis. I knew that he was exceedingly earnest in seeking the light of truth at that time in his private devotion, and was often on his knees at my bedside after I had gone to bed.”

The memory of these early struggles never faded from his mind. Only a year before his death he wrote to a friend: “I sympathise with you all the more in the state of philosophical speculation that you complain of, that I at one time experienced it myself. . . . Under all the difficulties and despondencies of such a state, I would still encourage you to prayer, Cry as you can. With real moral earnestness and a perseverance in this habit, light will at length arise out of darkness.”

About the age of thirty, during his ministry at Kilmany, Chalmers was laid aside for many weeks by illness. For four months he never left his room; for upwards of half a year he never entered his pulpit. “The first stage of a great and entire spiritual revolution was accomplished in him” at this time. His Journal for 1810



includes short private prayers, of which the following are characteristic examples :

“Heavenly Father, encompassed with error I implore Thy forgiveness for the past, and Thy direction for the future. Keep me in the way everlasting ; and under the feeling of life being but a pilgrimage, may I neither be too much devoted to its pleasures nor too much oppressed by its anxieties.”

“Father in heaven ! teach me what is right, and enable me to adhere to it. In all my undertakings enable me to sacrifice myself. Give justice to my conceptions of propriety, and confidence and effect to my execution of them. May I take heed lest I fall ; and in every triumph of my vigilance, may I give the glory and the gratitude to that mighty Being who reigns supreme in the heart of man, and gives birth to all His purposes.”

“Father of heaven ! teach me the tutorage of myself. May the gentleness of Thy religion shed its influence over me. Teach us the precariousness of all earthly blessings ; and in feeling our entire dependence upon Thee, may we become every day more pious, more spiritual, more heavenly.”

“Heavenly Father, confirm more and more the ascendancy of principle over me.”

(*May 6, 1810.*) “I preached this Sunday after a retirement of thirty-one weeks from all public duty, and have not felt myself the worse of it. I had to make an effort in the way of keeping myself from being overpowered. Gracious God ! reveal to me the importance and extent of my

duties, and may the glory and interest of religion be all my exertion and all my joy."

(*July 23.*) "Find Kilmany in one point of view to be a fitter theatre of moral discipline than Anster—that I meet with fewer temptations to dereliction of principle, and this is certainly to be preferred in the infancy of our religious course—O God, save me from falling. Set me in a sure place, and grant me in Thy good time the joys of the Christian faith and the diligence of the Christian practice. May I not think that the record of my faults is any atonement for them; but in the strength of the Christian faith, may I be vigilant and determined."

(*September 6.*) "Constant employment. Have resumed, in a moderate degree, my mathematical reading. Have to thank God for supplying me with such abundant resources of study and amusement, the grand materials of independence. Father of heaven! may Thy good Spirit never abandon me! guard my wandering mind against every relaxation of vigilance."

From that time onward brief prayers have a frequent place in the Journal.

On the afternoon of May 30, 1847, the last of his life, Dr. Chalmers wrote a short letter to his sister, Mrs. Morton. It closed "with earnest prayers for the mercy and grace of a reconciled Father in heaven on one and all of us." He went out, after writing this note, into the garden behind his house in Morningside, Edinburgh. As he sauntered round he was overheard by one of his family saying in low but very earnest tones, "O Father, my Heavenly Father!"

“ On returning to the drawing-room, he threw himself into his usual reclining posture. His conversation at first was joyous and playful; a shadow passed over him as some disquieting thought arose—but a light spread over his face as he said, that disquietudes lay light upon a man who could fix his heart on heaven.”

A few hours later, in the stillness of the night, he died without pain or conflict.

Thomas Carlyle wrote to his aged mother, when he heard the news: “ I believe there is not in all Scotland, or in all Europe, such a Christian priest left.”

“ Here was a man,” said Lord Rosebery, “ bustling, striving, organising, speaking and preaching with the dust and fire of the world on his clothes, but carrying his shrine with him everywhere.”

## CHAPTER XXX

SIR WALTER SCOTT

READERS of Sir Walter Scott must recognise the tenderness, sincerity, and reverence of his allusions to private prayer. Even in the slightest passing reference, his attitude is unmistakable. He describes, for instance, how Simon Glover, in "The Fair Maid of Perth," took his place with the congregation assembled in the Dominican Church on St. Valentine's Eve. "He knelt down with the air of a man who has something burdensome on his mind ; but when the service was ended he seemed free from anxiety, as one who had referred himself and his troubles to the disposal of heaven."

Rebecca, in her lonely prison within the Preceptory of Templestowe, forsaken by every friend, and with a shameful death in prospect, utters that evening prayer which has become, in Scott's translation, one of our most familiar hymns. It rises to solemn petition for her nation and herself in the third stanza :

" But present still, though now unseen ;  
When brightly shines the prosperous day,  
Be thoughts of Thee a cloudy screen  
To temper the deceitful ray.  
And oh, when stoops on Judah's path,  
In shade and storm, the frequent night,  
Be Thou, long-suffering, slow to wrath,  
A burning and a shining light."

Sublime thoughts are with the prisoner as she dwells on the history of her race, and she is ready to meet the fierce temptation offered by Brian de Bois-Guilbert. He bids her fly with him as the partner of his ambitious dreams. "Thou shalt be a queen, Rebecca ; on Mount Carmel shall we pitch the throne which my valour will gain for you, and I will exchange my long-desired baton for a sceptre."

Though he dwells by contrast, and in detail, on the horrors of the doom of fire, he has no power to shake Rebecca's courage. "Thy resolution may fluctuate," she tells him, "on the wild and changeful billows of human opinion, but mine is anchored on the Rock of Ages." In seeking to close the interview she says, "Farewell ! I waste no more words on thee ; the time that remains on earth to the daughter of Jacob must be otherwise spent. She must seek the Comforter, who may hide His face from His people, but who ever opens His ear to the cry of those who seek Him in sincerity and in truth."

When the Templar has left the cell, after his victim's words of generous pardon, Albert de Malvoisin says to him, "What ails thee, brother ? Thy step totters, thy brow is black as night. Art thou well, Bois-Guilbert ?" "Aye," answered the Templar, "as well as the wretch who is doomed to die within an hour. Nay, by the rood, not half so well ; for there be those in such state, who can lay down life like a cast-off garment."

One of the most attractive of Scott's heroes is Henry Morton, in "Old Mortality." After



the defeat of the Covenanters at Bothwell Brig, Morton is rescued by Claverhouse and his soldiers from the hands of Cameronian fanatics who were about to murder him. Left alone at the close of a day full of perils, he returns "thanks to heaven for rescuing him from danger even through the instrumentality of those who seemed his most dangerous enemies; he also prayed sincerely for the Divine assistance in guiding his course through times which held out so many dangers and so many errors. And having thus poured out his spirit in prayer before the Great Being who gave it, he betook himself to the repose which he so much required."

Nowhere has Sir Walter expressed more earnestly his belief in the power of prayer than in the scene where Jeanie Deans (in "The Heart of Midlothian") tries to decide whether she ought to keep an assignation with a stranger at Muschat's Cairn after nightfall. "Left alone and separated from all earthly counsel, she had recourse to a friend and adviser, whose ear is open to the cry of the poorest and most afflicted of His people. She knelt, and prayed with fervent sincerity, that God would please to direct her what course to follow in her arduous and distressing situation. It was the belief of the time and sect to which she belonged, that special answers to prayer, differing little in their character from Divine inspiration, were, as they expressed it, 'borne in' upon their minds in answer to their earnest petitions in a crisis of difficulty. Without entering into abstruse points of divinity, one thing is plain; namely, that the person who

lays open his doubts and distresses in prayer, with feeling and sincerity, must necessarily, in the act of doing so, purify his mind from the dross of worldly passions and interests, and bring it into that state, when the resolutions adopted are likely to be selected rather from a sense of duty, than from any inferior motive. Jeanie arose from her devotions, with her heart fortified to endure affliction, and encouraged to face difficulties. ‘I will meet this unhappy man,’ she said to herself—‘unhappy he must be, since I doubt he has been the cause of poor Effie’s misfortune—but I will meet him, be it for good or ill. My mind shall never cast up to me, that, for fear of what might be said or done to myself, I left that undone that might even yet be the rescue of her.’ ”

Mary Avenel, in “The Monastery,” obtains possession of the Black Book, her dead mother’s Bible, and reads in it “the affecting promise, ‘I will never leave thee nor forsake thee,’ and the consoling exhortation, ‘Call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee.’ She read them, and her heart acquiesced in the conclusion, Surely this is the Word of God ! ”

Not all the din of the house, whose imprisoned inmates were seeking to burst a way to freedom, “could divert Mary Avenel from the new course of study on which she had so singularly entered. ‘The serenity of heaven,’ she said, ‘is above me ; the sounds which are around are but those of earth and earthly passion.’ ”

When Mary heard that her lover, Halbert Glendinning, had been mysteriously preserved

from death, she felt that his life had been granted in answer to prayer. "She had but newly learned to pray," writes Sir Walter with his calm wisdom, "and it seemed to her that her prayers had been instantly answered—that the compassion of heaven, which she had learned to implore in the words of Scripture, had descended upon her after a manner almost miraculous, and recalled the dead from the grave at the sound of her lamentations. There was a dangerous degree of enthusiasm in this strain of feeling, but it originated in the purest devotion."

The wise teaching of Henry Warden saves the heiress of Avenel from "putting an imperfect or even false sense upon some of the doctrines which appeared most comprehensible."

Very quietly sometimes, Sir Walter introduces references to graver subjects into the novels. Darsie Latimer, in "Redgauntlet," writes, for example, to Alan Fairford about his supper with the mysterious fisherman of the Solway: "Thou knowest thy father's strict and excellent domestic discipline has trained me to hear the invocation of a blessing before we break the daily bread for which we are taught to pray. I paused a moment, and without designing to do so, I suppose my manner made him sensible of what I expected."

Since the wicked Cristal Nixon refuses to turn chaplain, and Mabel Moffat will say no grace for a heretic, the master of the house asks an unnamed young girl (afterwards revealed as Darsie's sister) to perform the office. "The girl, who was really pretty, came forward with timid modesty, and apparently unconscious that

she was doing anything uncommon, pronounced the benediction in a silver-toned voice, and with affecting simplicity—her cheek colouring just so much as to show that, on a less solemn occasion, she would have felt more embarrassed.” Next morning his strange landlord wakens Darsie early. “There be your clothes—a brown crust and a draught of milk wait you if you choose to break your fast ; but you must make haste.”

“ ‘ I must first,’ I said, ‘ take the freedom to spend a few minutes alone, before beginning the ordinary works of the day.’ ‘ Oh !—humph !—I cry your devotions pardon,’ he replied, and left the apartment.”

“ Our hope, heavenly and earthly,” wrote Sir Walter in his “ Journal,” “ is poorly anchored if the cable parts upon the stream. I believe in God, who can change evil into good ; and I am confident that what befalls us is always ultimately for the best.”

## CHAPTER XXXI

### THE NINETEENTH CENTURY : TWO POETS

TENNYSON and Browning, the two chief English poets of the nineteenth century, expressed in their writings a firm belief in the efficacy of private prayer. Familiar as they are, we must include the words of Tennyson's "Morte d'Arthur," in which the dying King Arthur says to his faithful knight, Sir Bedivere :

"The old order changeth, yielding place to new,  
And God fulfils Himself in many ways,  
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.  
Comfort thyself : What comfort is in me ?  
I have lived my life, and that which I have done  
May He within Himself make pure ! but thou,  
If thou shouldst never see my face again,  
Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer  
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice  
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.  
For what are men better than sheep or goats  
That nourish a blind life within the brain,  
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer  
Both for themselves and those who call them friend ?  
For so the whole round earth is every way  
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."

Browning was near the beginning of his career when he gave us, in "Paracelsus," a sublime example of intercessory prayer. Festus utters these words at the bedside of his friend Aureole (Paracelsus), who is dying in a hospital cell at Salzburg :



" God ! Thou art love ! I build my faith on that.  
 Even as I watch beside Thy tortured child  
 Unconscious whose hot tears fall fast by him,  
 So doth Thy right hand guide us through the world  
 Wherein we stumble. God ! What shall we say ?  
 How has he sinned ? How else should he have done ?  
 Surely he sought Thy praise—Thy praise, for all  
 He might be busied by the task so much  
 As half forget awhile its proper end.  
 Dost Thou well, Lord ? Thou canst not but prefer  
 That I should range myself upon his side—  
 How could he stop at every step to set  
 Thy glory forth ? Hadst Thou but granted him  
 Success, Thy honour would have crowned success,  
 A halo round a star. Or, say he erred—  
 Save him, dear God ; it will be like Thee ; bathe him  
 In light and life ! Thou art not made like us ;  
 We should be wroth in such a case ; but Thou  
 Forgivest—so, forgive these passionate thoughts  
 Which come unsought and will not pass away !  
 I know Thee, who hast kept my path, and made  
 Light for me in the darkness, tempering sorrow  
 So that it reached me like a solemn joy ;  
 It were too strange that I should doubt Thy Love.  
 But what am I ? Thou madest him and knowest  
 How he was fashioned. I could never err  
 That way : the quiet place beside Thy feet,  
 Reserved for me, was ever in my thoughts !  
 But he—Thou shouldst have favoured him as well ! "

In his poem, " *Instans Tyrannus*," Browning  
 tells of a wicked ruler who sought to destroy an  
 obscure subject who had incurred his personal  
 hatred. His last plan was laid, fires ran with  
 never a break round the victim's creep-hole.

" Overhead, did my thunder combine  
 With my underground mine :  
 Till I looked from my labour content  
 To enjoy the event.  
 " When sudden . . . how think ye, the end ?  
 Did I say without friend ?  
 Say rather, from marge to blue marge  
 The whole sky grew his targe

With the sun's self for visible boss,  
 While an Arm ran across  
 Which the earth heaved beneath like a breast  
 Where the wretch was safe prest !  
 Do you see ! Just my vengeance complete,  
 The man sprang to his feet,  
 Stood erect, caught at God's skirts, and prayed !  
 —So, *I* was afraid ! ”

“ Ferishtah's Fancies,” the work of Browning's ripe old age, show that his mind was deeply pondering the mysteries of private and intercessory prayer. His dervish gave thanks for the least bounty granted by the Father in heaven. The poem “Cherries” rebukes the many who in our time have abandoned the good practice of grace at meals.

A disciple finds Ferishtah breakfasting on cherries, and apologises for his intrusion. The master makes courteous reply :

“ Friend, I have finished my repast, thank God ! ”

The visitor exclaims in astonishment :

“ There now, thy thanks for breaking fast on fruit ! ”

In his view, men should praise God for bigger things.

“ Why not look up in wonder, bid the stars  
 Attest my praise of the All-mighty One ?—  
 What are man's puny members and as mean  
 Requirements weighed with Star-King Mushtari ? ”

Ferishtah answers with the parable of a stranger who was exploring the Shah's palace at Ispahan, lost in wonder at its glories :

“ Gold here and jewels there,—so vast, that hall—  
 So perfect yon pavilion !—lamps above  
 Bidding look up from luxuries below,—

Evermore wonder topping wonder,—last—  
 Sudden he comes upon a cosy nook,  
 A nest-like little chamber, with his name,  
 His own, yea, his and no mistake at all,  
 Plain o'er the entry : what, and he describes  
 Just those arrangements inside—oh, the care!  
 Suited to soul and body both,—so snug  
 The cushion—nay, the pipe-stand furnished so !  
 Whereat he cries aloud—what think'st thou, Friend ?  
 ' That these my slippers should be just my choice,  
 Even to the colour that I most affect,  
 Is nothing : ah, that lamp, the central sun,  
 What must it light within its minaret  
 I scarce dare guess the good of ! Who lives there ?  
 That let me wonder at—no slipper toys  
 Meant for the foot, forsooth, which kicks them—thus ! ' ”

“ Littleness of love,” Ferishtah says, “ befits  
 the littleness of loving thing.” As regards the  
 Star-king Mushtari :

“ To me his twinkle blue  
 Is all I know of him and thank him for,  
 And therefore I have put the same in verse—  
 ' Like yon blue twinkle, twink's thine eye, my Love ! ' ”

Ferishtah closes with this counsel :

“ Thank, praise, love  
 (Sum up thus) for the lowest favours first,  
 The commonest of comforts ! aught beside  
 Very omnipotence had overlooked  
 Such needs, arranging for thy little life.  
 Nor waste thy power of love in wonderment  
 At what thou wiselier lettest shine unsoiled  
 By breath of word. That this last cherry soothes  
 A roughness of my palate, that I know :  
 His Maker knows why Mushtari was made.”

## CHAPTER XXXII

WILLIAM EWART GLADSTONE

LORD SALISBURY spoke of Mr. Gladstone as "a great Christian," and the truth of his words becomes evident as we study the Liberal statesman's intimate writings. At the age of twenty-two he wrote in his diary, "One conclusion theoretically has been much on my mind—it is the increased importance and necessity and benefit of prayer—of the life of obedience and self-sacrifice. May God use me as a vessel for His own purposes, of whatever character and results in relation to myself. . . . May the God who loves us all, still vouchsafe me a testimony of His abiding presence in the protracted, though wellnigh dormant life of a desire which at times has risen high in my soul, a fervent and buoyant hope that I might work an energetic work in this world, and by that work (whereof the worker is only God) I might grow into the image of the Redeemer. . . . It matters not whether the sphere of duty be large or small, but may it be duly filled. May those faint and languishing embers be kindled by the truth of the everlasting spirit into a living and a life-giving flame." <sup>1</sup>

After his speech in the Commons on the Irish

<sup>1</sup> Morley's "Gladstone," vol. i, p. 84.

Church (March 31, 1835) he made this comment : "I cannot help here recording that this matter of speaking is really my strongest religious exercise. On all occasions, and to-day especially, was forced upon me the humiliating sense of my inability to exercise my reason in the face of the H. of C., and of the necessity of my utterly failing, unless God gave me the strength and language. It was after all a poor performance, but would have been poorer had He never been in my thoughts as a present and powerful aid."<sup>1</sup>

From the diary of 1836 : "Wordsworth came into breakfast the other day before his time. I asked him to excuse me while I had my servant to prayers ; but he expressed a hearty wish to be present, which was delightful."

To one of his sons at Oxford Mr. Gladstone sent a little paper of suggestions which were "the actual description of his own lifelong habit and unbroken practice." These words are included : "As to duties directly religious, such as daily prayer in the morning /and evening, and daily reading of some portion of the Holy Scripture, or as to the holy ordinances of the Gospel, there is little need, I am confident, to advise you ; one thing, however, I would say, that it is not difficult, and it is most beneficial, to cultivate the habit of inwardly turning the thoughts to God, though but for a moment in the course or during the intervals of our business ; which continually presents occasions requiring His aid and guidance."

Mr. Gladstone imagined the visible Church

<sup>1</sup> Morley's "Gladstone," vol. i, p. 126.



herself as offering silent and secret prayer. After visiting St. Paul's Cathedral in March 1841, he set down these words : " What an image, what a crowd of images ! Amidst the unceasing din, and the tumult of men hurrying this way and that for gold, or pleasure, or some self-desire, the vast fabric thrusts itself up to heaven and firmly plants itself on soil begrudged to an occupant that yields no lucre. But the city cannot thrust forth its cathedral ; and from thence arises the harmonious measured voice of intercession from day to day. The Church praying and deprecating continually for the living mass that are dead while they live, from out of the very centre of that mass ; silent and lonesome is her shrine, amidst the noise, the thunder of multitudes. Silent, lonesome, motionless, yet full of life ; for were we not more dead than the stones, which, built into that sublime structure, witness continually to what is great and everlasting—did priest or chorister, or the casual worshipper but apprehend the grandeur of his function in that spot—the very heart must burst with the tide of emotions gathering within it."

On the eve of his seventieth birthday he wrote : " Three things I would ask of God over and above all the bounty which surrounds me. This first, that I may escape into retirement. This second, that I may speedily be enabled to divest myself of everything resembling wealth. And the third—if I may—that when God calls me He may call me speedily. To die in church appears to be a great euthanasia, but not at a time to disturb worshippers. Such are some of an old man's

thoughts in whom there is something that consents not to be old."

These words were written on December 28, 1879. Mr. Gladstone had carried through that autumn his triumphant first Midlothian campaign. Fifteen more years of public life remained to him. The third petition was granted to his friend Archbishop Benson, but his own last illness was slow and terrible.

Amid the Home Rule struggle in 1886, Mr. Gladstone received from an evangelical lady of known piety a form of prayer that had been issued against Home Rule. His reply was one of great gentleness: "I thank you much for your note; and though I greatly deplored the issue, and the ideas of the prayer in question, yet from the moment when I heard it was your composition, I knew perfectly well that it was written in entire good faith, and had no relation to political controversy in the ordinary sense. . . . It is a great satisfaction to agree with you, as I feel confident that I must do, in the conviction that of prayers we cannot possibly have too much in this great matter, and for my own part I heartily desire that, unless the policy I am proposing be for the honour of God and the good of His creatures, it may be trampled under foot and broken into dust."<sup>1</sup>

As a final quotation we take these words, written in 1894, after Mr. Gladstone had undergone an operation for cataract: "For the first time in my life there has been given to me by the providence of God a period of comparative leisure,

<sup>1</sup> "Life," vol. iii, p. 348.

reckoning at the present date to four and a half months. Such a period drives the mind in upon itself and invites, almost constrains, to recollection, and the rendering at least internally an account of life ; further it lays the basis of a habit of meditation, to the formation of which the course of my existence, packed and crammed with occupation outwards, never stagnant, oft-times overdriven, has been extremely hostile. As there is no life which in its detail does not seem to afford intervals of brief leisure, or what is termed ' waiting ' for others engaged with us in some common action, these are commonly spent in murmurs and in petulant desire for their termination. But in reality they supply excellent opportunities for brief or ejaculatory prayer." <sup>1</sup>

When Mr. Gladstone lay dying in May 1898, a few friends were allowed to visit him. One of these was Mrs. Benson, widow of the Archbishop of Canterbury, who had died suddenly while attending service in Hawarden Church. Writing to one of her sons, Mrs. Benson thus described the moments in the sickroom : " It is most pitiful, but also magnificent. . . . He is cast down and depressed, and suffers sadly at times. . . . His faith has never failed, and it is his uselessness which seems to weigh on his mind. . . . They hope he sleeps a good deal. Mrs. Wickham said he seems ' communing with God '—and from time to time he breaks out with his favourite hymn, ' Praise to the holiest in the height ' (only he likes best to say ' high-

<sup>1</sup> " Life," vol. iii, p. 518.

est'). He blesses everyone who comes near him.

"The evening drew on and I had not seen him, when suddenly Mary Drew came to me and said, 'Come quickly. I have told him you were here, and he says he will see you at once—but, he said, "I can't talk."' We ran to his room. It was very dark—he always will have it so—and in the middle with his back to the light he lay in a long chair; the dim light fell on his splendid head.

"I knelt by him and took his hand. M. D. said, 'Here is Mrs. Benson.' He took my hand and kissed it, and said, 'God bless you. Will you give me your prayers?' I said how he always had them—how I prayed continuously for him. 'Nobody,' he said, 'needs your prayers more than the poor sinner who lies here before you.' This rang out in his magnificent voice—no alteration in that; then he went on, 'I often think of your husband; perhaps he pities me now.' I said, 'He loves you now as he did always,' and I kissed his hand which was still holding mine. He blessed me again and I came away. You will know all it was—sight and sound and words."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Catherine Gladstone," by her daughter, Mary Drew, pp. 284, 285.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

ROBERT WILLIAM DALE

THERE was no more representative Free Church leader in the last century than Dr. R. W. Dale of Birmingham. His great character and massive intellect have left an enduring impression on the nation's life. By his own wish, no records were preserved of his devotional pulpit utterances. "Pray do not dream of reporting my prayers," he wrote; "*they are for God*, who, I trust, interprets and answers them." He came forth from an inner sanctuary like the priest who bore the names of Israel on his heart. His young assistant at Carrs Lane Congregational Church, the Rev. George Barber, said: "I cannot omit to mention all the help his prayers were to me; those in the sanctuary were the noblest and the tenderest I have ever heard or read. One of the old members, a poor old woman of sixty-five, used to say 'Ah me! I cannot understand his sermons, but his prayers do me so much good that I always come.' It was, however, at family prayers that I felt most the power he seemed to have with God. Night after night have I made an excuse to call, so that I might stay for family worship; it was as though one were in the presence of the 'burning bush,' and oftentimes as we rose from our knees we saw a new light shining in each other's face."



“Vigilance” was the key-note of Dr. Dale’s personal ministry. The writer of these lines heard him preach the memorial sermon for Dr. Allon from the text, “They watch for your souls, as they that must give account.” We are told that when St. John of the Cross was in charge of a small community at Segovia he allowed himself little more than two hours’ sound sleep in the night, reserving all the rest for prayer and meditation. The public and household petitions of Dr. Dale had a background like that of the Spanish mystical writer and of the Psalmist who said: “My soul looks for the Lord, more eagerly than watchmen for the dawn, than watchmen for the dawn.”<sup>1</sup> Describing his own mental conflict in youth, he told how he read that “book of almost unparalleled influence in the religious literature of the century, John Angell James’s ‘Anxious Enquirer.’” “I read it on my knees, and in keen distress about my personal salvation. Night after night I waited with eager impatience for the house to become still, that in undisturbed solitude I might agonise over the book which had taught so many to trust in God.”<sup>2</sup> Doubts and difficulties beset him, but “at last, how, I cannot tell, all came clear; I ceased thinking of myself and of my faith, and thought only of Christ; and then I wondered that I should have been perplexed for even a single hour.” To Mrs. Cash, of Leamington, the kind friend whose help had opened his way to a college training for the ministry, Dale wrote at the age of twenty-four:

<sup>1</sup> Psalm cxxx. 6, in Dr. Moffatt’s translation.

<sup>2</sup> “Life of Dr. Dale” (1898), p. 16.

“The whole process and movement of the interior life seems in my eyes day by day more mysterious. Seasons of depression, heavy, terrible, overwhelming, come over me apparently without any very definite cause; stay in spite of means which seem most powerful to effect their removal; and then suddenly break off and depart at the bidding of a single text of Scripture perhaps, or a single prayer, or a single word from a Christian friend; or a single train of commonplace reflections.”

Public and private prayer, in his life, seemed to form one act of worship. Addressing the Congregational Union at Wolverhampton in 1869, the year of his Chairmanship, he used these remarkable words:

“In our public prayer we must think less than we have been accustomed to think of the taste, the criticism, the impatience of men who do not pray. In the presence of the awful perils from which we ask to be redeemed, of the infinite blessings we desire to obtain, and of the bright perfections we adore, we must not be troubled by the indifference and the weariness of those to whom these transcendent terrors and glories are all unreal. When we pray our great design is not to move men, but to move God; and if we fail to do that, we fail altogether.”

One of the most poignant sorrows of Dale's life was the death of his brother Thomas in 1883. He wrote to Dr. Westcott: “It has been a time of great agony. I have not been disciplined to die, and a great part of all that I was seems to have died in him. For a time I had no relief;

but at last, in the depth of my anguish, Christ revealed to me in quite a new way that He is my brother's Brother and mine. It is in the eternal commonplaces of the Faith that all strength lies, and all consolation, and all hope."

When recovering some years later from a dangerous illness, he recalled this bereavement in writing to a friend: "Half my life seemed rent away. I was conscious of the most violent disturbance of the heart. For the first time I learnt what is involved in Christ's having become our Brother. I shrink indeed from what seems to me—it is not so to many others—an irreverent familiarity in calling Him Brother. He may call me by that name in His great condescension, but I shrink from calling Him so; and yet the revelation in my sorrow of what brotherhood means remains a wonder and a glory."

To his "curate," the Rev. George Barber, Dale presented the "Manual of Intercessory Prayer," compiled by Father Benson of the Cowley House. "A copy was sent to me," he told the young man, "many years ago by a High Church lady with whom I had some very pleasant times on the Nile. . . . I have found it helpful for devotional purposes in solitary prayer—very helpful. . . . These High Churchmen, with the use they make of the liturgical and devotional literature of many centuries, have much to teach us." And again (1894): "I am reading Dr. Andrew Bonar's Life with much interest. He was a man of unusual devoutness. He tried to get two hours every day for actual prayer, and still was unsatisfied. You must read the book

when I come home. He said one striking thing: 'I can do more by praying than I can in any other way.'"

To his dear friend, Mrs. Richard Davies, Dr. Dale wrote a few weeks before his death: "We can never tell what blessed surprises are near to us. When, as the Collect says, we love what God commands, and desire what He has promised, it is certain that all things will go well with us."

His statue by Mr. Onslow Ford in the Birmingham Art Gallery "shows him as he was, not in the pulpit or on the platform, but in those hours of quietness, when, apart from the conflict and turmoil of the world, he dwelt in those high and sacred regions where the springs of the inner life take their rise."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The late Vice-Chancellor Sir Alfred Dale, in the biography of his father, p. 694.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### THE NINETEENTH CENTURY : FURTHER EXAMPLES

THE Ressaldar in "Kim," a hero of the Indian Mutiny, congratulates himself in old age that he has never wearied the gods, or pestered them with his prayers. "They will remember this," he thinks, "and give me a quiet place where I can drive my lance in the shade, and wait to welcome my sons." The fatalism of this heathen soldier might have been expected to pervade the world in the age of modern science and discovery, but the last two generations have witnessed, on the contrary, a large increase in the literature dealing with prayer in its psychology and practice. Christian biography in the nineteenth century provides an almost inexhaustible storehouse of material, and the limits of this book allow of only a few representative citations, which are taken from various ranks in life.<sup>4</sup>

"Our Collects," writes Dora Greenwell, "have among them but one speech and language; and this is the confession of natural weakness, joined with the reliance upon supernatural help. 'O God, forasmuch as without Thee we are not able to please Thee; mercifully grant that Thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts, through Jesus Christ our Lord.' When I consider



these inspired prayers, and remember how long they have been the life-breath of our National Church, I can but compare her with the Bride in Canticles, who said, 'I sleep, but my heart waketh.' Her Lord, however, cometh, that He may awake her out of sleep."<sup>1</sup>

Amid the sorrows of her early widowhood Queen Victoria wrote to the King of the Belgians, "I long for quiet and peace, and to be enabled to dwell on the blessed future !

"I *never* really realised the power of prayer till *now* ! When in an agony of loneliness, grief, and despair, I kneel by that bed, where *he* left us, decked with flowers, and pray *earnestly* to be enabled to be courageous, patient, and calm, and to be guided by my darling to *do what* he would wish ; then, a calm seems to come over me, a certainty my anguish is seen and heard *not* in vain, and I feel *lifted* ABOVE this miserable earth of sorrows ! It is *only* when one feels as though all were gone, all had deserted you, as I feel *so* often and so *much* during this terrible crisis, that one can *truly* appreciate the *power* and strength of prayer, and that one's *faith* rises with one's utter prostration of woe ! "

Carlyle wrote to his wife when she was mourning the death of her mother ; " Let us both cry for help to be better for each other, and for all duties in time coming. Articulate prayer is for me not possible, but the equivalent of it remains for ever in the heart and life of man. I say *let us* pray. God look down upon us ; guide us, not happily, but *well*, through life. Unite us well

<sup>1</sup> " Two Friends."

with our buried ones according to His will. Amen.”<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Carnegie Simpson says, in his biography of Principal Rainy: “One cannot enter into analysis of the extraordinarily spiritual reality which Dr. Rainy carried with him, and one would not even if one could. I shall but mention two features of it. Though it was a very secret of his soul, no one could fail to see what a place his prayers had in his life. Once he almost let it out, when in a sermon he said, in a kind of aside, ‘I could give up many things, but, oh, I could not give up my prayers.’ The other thing . . . was his consciousness and expectation of the life to come.”

Henry Drummond wrote from his father’s deathbed to a friend who was watching in his mother’s sickroom:

“How suddenly the water deepens sometimes in one’s life. How fast the bottom shelves, and yet how little one knows the depths that lie beyond—or whether the currents are to be swift or still! Well, I suppose it must be better, this deeper sea, than the shallows where the children play. . . . One thing I am learning, slowly, to believe in prayer. So I pray for you all.”<sup>2</sup>

Sanderson of Oundle, one of the leading educationalists of modern England, wrote these words: “A careful study of the Bible is a great aid to meditation: and this meditation or prayer is

<sup>1</sup> “Carlyle on Cromwell and Others,” by David Alec Wilson, p. 158.

<sup>2</sup> “Life of Henry Drummond,” by Sir George Adam Smith, p. 274.

very essential to a full life. We perish if we cease from prayer. Of course, true, earnest, helpful prayer is difficult. It is difficult to fix the attention, difficult to know what to pray for, what to pray about. Perhaps the best way is to meditate with a notebook. Pray and study. Write down your thoughts. Get your desires and aspirations definite."

Sir Henry Jones says of Welsh village families whom he had known in his youth: "Their homes were sacred with the daily prayers offered in them morning and evening, and sometimes at midday; and their knowledge of the Bible was marvellous." Of his grandfather, William Williams, he writes: "I can yet see him stooping over and leaning hard on the two sticks by the help of which he walked. Above all I remember seeing him on his knees in 'the big pew' of the little chapel, with his head thrown far back and his face turned upwards as he pleaded in passionate earnestness in prayer with his God."<sup>1</sup>

Of Dr. Alexander Whyte his biographer remarks: "Much as he valued the privilege of public worship—carefully as he prepared his own share in it—yet to him the typical and the highest form of devotion was secret prayer. This came out in his startling reply to the question of a young minister whether he advised the preparation of prayers for the pulpit: 'Certainly I do; but public prayer is an unnatural act.' The same thought is developed in the sermon on 'The Secret Burden,' based on one of his favourite passages in the prophets—that in

<sup>1</sup> "Old Memories," pp. 11, 12.

Zechariah, in which the word *apart* occurs eleven times in three verses.”<sup>1</sup>

“The overflowing of the soul,” wrote C. H. Spurgeon, “is the best praying in the world. Prayers that are indistinct, inharmonious, broken, made up of sighs and cries, and damped with tears—these are the prayers which win with heaven.”

Near the close of a long life spent in the service of the State, Lord [John] Russell said to his wife, “I’m very old—I’m eighty-five.” . . . “At another moment he said, ‘I’m quite ready to go now.’ Asked him where to? ‘To my grave, to my death.’ He also said, ‘Do you see me sometimes placing my hands in this way?’ (he was clasping them together). ‘That always means devotion—that I am asking God to be good to me.’ His voice was much broken by tears as he said these things.”<sup>2</sup>

When W. E. Forster was dying, his nearest relatives noted that he was much in prayer. “I went into his room,” writes Mrs. Forster, “at five o’clock this morning, and found him awake; he had had a wakeful night. I asked if I should repeat some hymns to soothe him to sleep; he said he was going to ask me. After I had repeated several, he asked me to kneel down. I knelt close beside him, and he began to pray in a trembling, solemn voice, like one speaking his real thoughts to One unseen. The whole burden and heart of it was, ‘Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief.’ I can only put down fragments.

<sup>1</sup> “Life,” by G. F. Barbour, 8th edition, p. 307.

<sup>2</sup> “Lady John Russell: A Memoir,” 3rd edition, p. 251.



Towards the end he prayed, 'Whether Thou art pleased to raise me up and enable me to serve my country again, or whether my work in Parliament is to be closed, help me to try and serve my country, or help me to bear it.' . . . All through there was the same solemn trembling earnestness of the tones, the grave simple language perfectly free from excitement, or from being hurried by emotion into a single unreal word—the strong reason and the humble spirit both laid open before the God to whom he spoke, and the burden still was, 'Lead me and give me light.' ”<sup>1</sup>

Bishop Handley Moule began his day on the stroke of seven. “Before 8.30 chapel he always had a time of devotional Bible reading in the study, followed by a time of prayer, walking up and down the north walk of the garden. Often when it was cold or wet he would come round to the chapel door with his grey shawl round his shoulders, sometimes powdered with snow! This early morning 'walk with God' was most characteristic. Canon Lillington recalls among early impressions, in 1887, at Ridley Hall, 'the sight of Mr. Moule walking in his garden every morning from 7 to 7.30 a.m., with eyes closed, and a shawl on his shoulders, saying his prayers.' The silence of nature helped him in his devotions, and he found he could pray best as he walked. He also found it an aid to thought and meditation to speak aloud to God in prayer.”<sup>2</sup>

Of Bishop Handley Moule's last days his sister-in-law, Mrs. Charles Moule, has written: “It

<sup>1</sup> “Life of W. E. Forster,” vol. ii, p. 547.

<sup>2</sup> “Life of Bishop Handley Moule,” p. 311.



was a wonderful time. The Bishop was very weak and ill, but never once did we hear a murmur or an impatient word; we all loved to be with him and to do anything for him. One of the nurses said to me, 'I have never been in such a sickroom; I shall never forget it.' What was the secret? Instead of an impatient word, it was a word of prayer continually day and night. He prayed, knew that he was heard, and was helped and comforted. And what seemed to me so wonderful was the simplicity of the prayer—'O blessed Jesus, may I rest and live in Thee and love Thee'—'Lord, make me patient'—'O God, help me.' When given food, 'Lord, bless it.' This had evidently been the habit of his life, and it was the wandering fever and the intense weakness that made him say it aloud. I believe that every one of us in that room has said how much we want to live by prayer as he did. God did not fail him in his hour of need."<sup>1</sup>

"In the early morning of the day preceding his death, the Bishop asked his daughter, Mrs. de Vere, 'to see if the light was coming'—he always longed for light. He then prayed, 'Lighten our darkness,' going on to 'O Lord our Heavenly Father, who hast safely brought us.'"<sup>1</sup> One of the last hymns sung to him by his daughter was Miss Rossetti's prayer, "None other Lamb, none other Name."

Principal Forsyth spoke these words in his address at the funeral of Charles Silvester Horne: "In the lives of true saints and great wrestlers with God (yea, and of some who know themselves

<sup>1</sup> "Life of Bishop Handley Moule," p. 346.

to be neither !) there come times when they wish to pray no more. It is not weariness, nor impatience, nor despair. It is the other way. It is fruition. 'In that day ye shall ask Me nothing.' It is not even repose. It is the old energy in a new and higher form. It is praise. It is adoration. We just worship. So death comes to such a soul as once filled this clay before us. Here his life was one ceaseless labour, one urgent and sustained prayer. Toil and prayer were one. It was a divine, sleepless importunacy. . . . But now all that gives way. Quest ends in conquest. And he does not simply rest from his labours. He 'triumphs in conclusive bliss.' The energy of his blessed spirit goes out in praise, and all that is in him is stirred up to bless and magnify His Saviour's glorious Name, in such high offices as suit the perfect energies of heaven."

A deep mystery is that of the prayers which to our poor knowledge seem unanswered. Father Maturin begged the intercession of his friends before he started as a passenger on board the "Lusitania" in May, 1915. He had spent the spring in America, and as the time drew near for his return to Oxford, he wrote to several people asking for prayers that he might be kept safe from all the perils of the sea. "When his body was washed ashore it was found without a lifebelt, and it was believed that he had refused one, as there were not enough to go round. Survivors from the ship related that they saw him standing on the deck, very pale, but perfectly calm, giving absolution to several passengers. As the last boat was lowered he handed in a little

child, saying, 'Find its mother.' " <sup>1</sup> He had been saved from the most terrible of ocean dangers, the danger of panic.

To the most recent testimonies we add that of Beatrice Webb (Mrs. Sidney Webb) in "My Apprenticeship" (1926). There are few more impressive passages in the entire literature of our subject. "The long-drawn controversy, between the Ego that affirms and the Ego that denies the validity of religious mysticism, ended, not in a reversion to the creed of Christianity, not even in an affirmation by the intellect of the existence of a spiritual power with whom man could enter into communion, but in an intuitive use of prayer as, for one of my temperament, essential to the right conduct of life. A secularist friend once cross-examined me as to what exactly I meant by prayer; he challenged me to define the process of prayer, to describe its happening. I answered that I would gladly do so if I could find the words. The trouble is, as Tagore observed about poetry, that words have meanings, or, as I should prefer to say, *predominantly intellectual meanings*; and that in prayer, even more than in poetry, it is emotion and not reason that seeks transmission. Religion is love; in no case is it logic. That is why, down all the ages of human development, prayer has been intimately associated, whether as a cause or as an effect, with the nobler and more enduring forms of architecture and music; associated, too, with poetry and painting, with the awe-inspiring aspects of nature, with the great emotional

<sup>1</sup> "Father Maturin: a Memoir," by Maisie Ward, pp. 59, 60.

mysteries of maternity, mating, and death. In another place I may try (and probably fail) to express, by the clumsy mechanism of the written word, the faith I hold; that it is by prayer, by communion with an all-pervading spiritual force, that the soul of man discovers the purpose or goal of human endeavour, as distinguished from the means or process by which human beings may attain their ends. . . . At this point in my narrative it suffices to record the fact that, during the ten years intervening between my Mother's death (1882; *æt* 24) and my father's death and my own marriage (1892; *æt* 34)—crucial years during which I acquired the craft of a social investigator, experienced intense emotional strain, and persisted in continuous intellectual toil under adverse circumstances—it was the habit of prayer which enabled me to survive, and to emerge relatively sound in body and sane in mind.”<sup>1</sup>

We close this chapter with a passage on morning and evening prayers by J. H. Newman: “We know in the common engagements of life, the importance of collecting and arranging our thoughts calmly and accurately before proceeding to any important business, in order to the right performance of it; and so in that one really needful occupation, the care of our eternal interests, if we would have our minds composed, our desires subdued, and our tempers heavenly, through the day, we must, before commencing the day's employment, stand still awhile to look into ourselves, and commune with our hearts by

<sup>1</sup> “My Apprenticeship,” pp. 104, 105.

way of preparing ourselves for the trials and duties on which we are entering. A like reason may be assigned for evening prayer, viz., as affording us a time of looking back on the day past, and summing up (as it were) that account, which, if *we* do not reckon, at least God has reckoned, and written down in that book which will be produced at the Judgment; a time of confessing sin, and of praying for forgiveness, of giving thanks for what we have done well, and for mercies received, of making good resolutions in reliance on the help of God, and of sealing up and setting sure the day past, at least as a stepping stone of good for the morrow.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Parochial and Plain Sermons,” vol. i, pp. 248, 249.



## CHAPTER XXXV

### MISSIONARIES

WE take next a few examples from the experience of missionaries, especially those who have ventured as pioneers into the strongholds of heathenism.

Raymond Lull, "the illuminated doctor," sought to make converts among the Moslems in the thirteenth century. He set before himself as the highest aim, ultimate martyrdom. His English biographer, Dr. Barber, quotes the following passage from his writings: "O long-suffering and pitiful Lord! many a time have I trembled with fear and cold. When will the day and hour come when my body will tremble for the great warmth of love and eager longing and delight in dying for its Creator and Saviour? . . . Although, O God, I am unworthy of dying for Thee, nevertheless I do not give up the hope of obtaining this holy and precious death. For as Thou, O Lord, hast given life to Thy unworthy servant, which I have never deserved, so wilt Thou, if it please Thee, give this glorious death, though I am utterly unworthy."

"If perchance, O Lord, Thou deny to me the death of a martyr, assuredly grant me, I pray, the grace of dying in weeping, lamenting, and

longing to die for Thy love, my Lord, my Creator, my Saviour."

This brave missionary was murdered on the coast of Africa on June 30, 1315. His relics were preserved in Palma Cathedral, on his native island, Majorca. Translations of his mystical writings and of his "Blanquerna," a medieval "Pilgrim's Progress," have been made by Professor Allison Peers.

Among modern missionaries the dearest name is that of David Livingstone. The key-note of his prayers is sincerity. There is nowhere, in his "Letters" and "Journals," any attempt to "speak the language of Canaan," none of that conventional phraseology which we find in more than one biography from the African field. The warm humanity of Livingstone, his healthy absorption in secular as well as religious interests, are apparent on every page of his writings.

His "Last Journals" are mainly occupied with incidents of travel and with the passing events of the day, but there are certain passages which unveil his inner life. One of these was written on his birthday, March 19, 1872: "My Jesus, my King, my Life, my All; I again dedicate my whole self to Thee. Accept me, and grant, O Gracious Father, that ere this year is gone I may finish my task. In Jesus' name I ask it. Amen, so let it be."

A few weeks later he wrote: "He will keep His word—the gracious One, full of grace and truth—no doubt of it. He said, 'Him that cometh unto Me, I will in nowise cast out,' and, 'Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name I will give

it.' He will keep His word; then I can come and humbly present my petition, and it will be all right. Doubt is here inadmissible, surely."

And again: "Wearisome waiting this: and yet the men cannot be here before the middle or end of this month. I have been sorely let and hindered in this journey, but it may have been all for the best. I will trust in Him to whom I commit my way."

Experiences of devout thankfulness occur very frequently in his "Journals." On the early morning of May 1, 1873, Livingstone's men entered the hut where their master lay. "Passing inside they looked towards the bed. Dr. Livingstone was not lying on it, but appeared to be engaged in prayer, and they instinctively drew backwards for the instant. Pointing to him, Majwara said, 'When I lay down he was just as he is now, and it is because I find that he does not move that I fear he is dead.' They asked the lad how long he had slept. Majwara said he could not tell, but he was sure that it was some considerable time; the men drew nearer.

"A candle stuck by its own wax to the top of the box, shed a light sufficient for them to see his form. Dr. Livingstone was kneeling by the side of his bed, his body stretched forward, his head buried in his hands upon the pillow. For a minute they watched him; he did not stir, there was no sign of breathing; then one of them, Matthew, advanced softly to him, and placed his hands to his cheeks. It was sufficient; life had

been extinct some time, and the body was almost cold; Livingstone was dead.”<sup>1</sup>

A hero fit to rank with Livingstone was John G. Paton, the Apostle of the New Hebrides. He tells in his “Autobiography” how his father, a village stockingmaker, set aside in his cottage home a sanctuary for prayer. Eleven children grew up in that small house at Torthorwald, four miles north of Dumfries. “Our home,” writes Dr. Paton, “consisted of a ‘but’ and a ‘ben’ and a ‘mid room,’ or chamber, called the ‘closet.’ The one end was my mother’s domain, and served all the purposes of dining-room and kitchen and parlour, besides containing two large wooden erections, called by our Scotch peasantry ‘box-beds’; not holes in the wall, as in cities, but grand, big, airy beds, adorned with many-coloured counterpanes, and hung with natty curtains, showing the skill of the mistress of the house. The other end was my father’s workshop, filled with five or six ‘stocking frames,’ whirring with the constant action of five or six pairs of busy hands and feet, and producing right genuine hosiery for the merchants at Hawick and Dumfries. The ‘closet’ was a very small apartment betwixt the other two, having room only for a bed, a little table, and a chair, with a diminutive window shedding diminutive light on the scene. This was the Sanctuary of that cottage home. Thither daily, and oftentimes a day, generally after each meal, we saw our father retire, and ‘shut to the door’; and we children got to understand by a sort of spiritual instinct

<sup>1</sup> “Last Journals,” vol. ii, p. 308.



(for the thing was too sacred to be talked about) that prayers were being poured out there for us, as of old by the High-Priest within the veil in the Most Holy Place. We occasionally heard the pathetic echoes of a trembling voice pleading as if for life, and we learned to slip out and in past that door on tiptoe, not to disturb the holy colloquy. The outside world might not know, but we knew, whence came that happy light as of a new-born smile that always was dawning on my father's face : it was a reflection from the Divine Presence, in the consciousness of which he lived. Never, in temple or cathedral, on mountain or in glen, can I hope to feel that the Lord God is more near, more visibly walking and talking with men, than under that humble cottage roof of thatch and oaken wattles. Though everything else in religion were by some unthinkable catastrophe to be swept out of memory, or blotted from my understanding, my soul would wander back to those early scenes, and shut itself up once again in that Sanctuary Closet, and, hearing still the echoes of those cries to God, would hurl back all doubt with the victorious appeal, ' He walked with God, why may not I ? ' "

When John G. Paton set out for Glasgow, where he hoped to obtain the means of education for the Ministry, he had to walk forty miles from Torthorwald to Kilmarnock, and travel thence by train. " My dear father," he says, " walked with me the first six miles of the way. His counsels and tears and heavenly conversation on that parting journey are fresh in my heart as if it had been but yesterday ; and tears are on



my cheeks as freely now as then, whenever memory steals me away to the scene. For the last half-mile or so we walked on together in almost unbroken silence—my father, as was often his custom, carrying hat in hand, while his long, flowing, yellow hair (then yellow, but in later years white as snow) streamed like a girl's down his shoulders. His lips kept moving in silent prayers for me; and his tears fell fast when our eyes met each other in looks for which all speech was vain! We halted on reaching the appointed parting place; he grasped my hand firmly for a minute in silence, and then solemnly and affectionately said: 'God bless you, my son! Your father's God prosper you, and keep you from all evil!'

"Unable to say more, his lips kept moving in silent prayer: in tears we embraced, and parted. I ran off as fast as I could; and, when about to turn a corner in the road where he would lose sight of me, I looked back and saw him still standing with head uncovered where I had left him—gazing after me. Waving my hat in adieu, I was round the corner and out of sight in an instant. But my heart was too full and sore to carry me further, so I darted into the side of the road and wept for a time. Then, rising up cautiously, I climbed the dyke to see if he yet stood where I had left him; and just at that moment I caught a glimpse of him climbing the dyke and looking out for me! He did not see me, and after he had gazed eagerly in my direction for a while he got down, set his face towards home, and began to return—his head still uncovered,

and his heart, I felt sure, still rising in prayers for me. I watched through blinding tears, till his form faded from my gaze ; and then, hastening on my way, vowed deeply and oft, by the help of God to live and act so as never to grieve or dishonour such a father and mother as He had given me."

In the gloomiest period of his work on the island of Tanna, after the death of his young wife and their infant son, when murder was threatening him from every side, a friendly chief, Nowar, hid Mr. Paton in a chestnut tree in a bush plantation. He writes in his "Autobiography": "Being entirely at the mercy of such doubtful and vacillating friends, I, though perplexed, felt it best to obey. I climbed into the tree, and was left there alone in the bush. The hours I spent there live all before me as if it were but yesterday. I heard the frequent discharging of muskets, and the yells of the Savages. Yet I sat there among the branches, as safe in the arms of Jesus. Never, in all my sorrows, did my Lord draw nearer to me, and speak more soothingly in my soul, than when the moonlight flickered among these chestnut leaves, and the night air played on my throbbing brow, as I told all my heart to Jesus. Alone, yet not alone ! If it be to glorify my God, I will not grudge to spend many nights alone in such a tree, to feel again my Saviour's spiritual presence, to enjoy His consoling fellowship. If thus thrown back upon your own soul, alone, all, all alone, in the midnight, in the bush, in the very embrace of death itself, have you a Friend that will not fail you then ?

“Gladly would I have lingered there for one night of comparative peace! But, about midnight, Nowar sent his son to call me down from the tree, and to guide me to the shore where he himself was, as it was now time to take to sea in the canoe. Pleading for my Lord’s continuing presence, I had to obey. My life and the lives of my Aneityumese now hung upon a very slender thread; the risk was almost equally great from our friends so called, or from our enemies. Had I been a stranger to Jesus and to prayer, my reason would verily have given way, but my comfort and joy sprang out of these words, ‘I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee; lo, I am with you alway!’ Pleading these promises, I followed my guide.”

So fierce was the temper of the heathen that the mission on Tanna had to be abandoned for a time. Mr. Paton was rescued by the “Blue Bell” in the spring of 1862.

James Gilmour of Mongolia was a valiant soul, whose work, like that of Livingstone, carried him to lonely places. He wrote to a Cheshunt College fellow-student just before his departure for China: “Companions I can scarcely hope to meet, and the feeling of being *alone* comes over me till I think of Christ and His blessed promise, ‘Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world.’ No one who does not go away, leaving all and going alone, can feel the force of this promise; and when I begin to feel my heart threatening to go down, I betake myself to this companionship, and, thank God, I have felt the blessedness of

this promise rushing over me repeatedly when I knelt down and spoke to Jesus as a present companion, from whom I was sure to find sympathy. I have felt a tingle of delight thrilling over me as I felt His presence, and thought that wherever I may go He is still with me. I have once or twice lately felt a melting sweetness in the name of Jesus as I spoke to Him and told Him my trouble. Yes, and the trouble went away, and I arose all right. Is it not blessed of Christ to care so much about us poor feeble men, so sinful and so careless about honouring Him? The moment we come to Him He is ready with His consolations for us.”<sup>1</sup>

The diary of this great missionary is full of ejaculatory prayers. “July 10 (1870). Rose 6.30. Dull morning, rained a little. Felt uncomfortable at the idea of being killed; felt troubled at the idea of leaving Peking. How am I to pack and carry my goods? Felt troubled at remaining in the midst of a troubled city, with a government weak and stupid. How is my mission to get on beginning thus? O God, let me cast all my care upon Thee, and commit my soul also to Thy safe keeping. Keep me, O God, in perfect peace.”<sup>2</sup> Two days later he writes: “My creed leads me to think that prayer is efficacious, and surely a day’s asking God to overrule all these events for good is not lost. Still, there is a great feeling that when a man is praying he is doing nothing, and this feeling, I am sure, makes us give undue importance to

<sup>1</sup> “James Gilmour of Mongolia,” by Richard Lovett, p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.



work, sometimes even to the hurrying over or even to the neglect of prayer."

Strong, simple, and direct was Gilmour's use of prayer. Two years before the end he wrote to a friend: "All I know about the process is just going to God and telling what I want, and asking to be allowed to have it. 'Seek, and ye shall find; ask, and ye shall receive.' I know no secret but this." And later, "You say you want reviving—Go direct to Jesus and ask it straight out, and you'll get it straight away. This revived state is not a thing you need to work yourself up into, or need to come to England to have operated upon you—Jesus can effect it anywhere, and does effect it everywhere whenever a man or woman, or men and women, ask for it. . . . My dear brother, I have learned that the source of much blessing is just to go to Jesus and tell Him what you need."<sup>1</sup>

During his last brief illness he seemed at one time to be addressing an audience and earnestly gesticulating with his hands; and with as much force as he could command he said: "We are not spending the time as we should; we ought to be waiting on God in prayer for blessing on the work He has given us to do. I would like to make a rattling speech—but I cannot—I am very ill—and can only say these few words."

Of James Chalmers of New Guinea, his friend and colleague, Dr. Lawes of Vatorata, wrote: "That which characterised our beloved Tamate most as a missionary, and as a leader among his

<sup>1</sup> "James Gilmour of Mongolia," pp. 261, 262.



brethren, was spiritual power. He was a Christian of the robust, healthy type, with instinctive hatred of all cant and sham. A man of great faith, mighty in prayer, and full of the love of Christ. He realised to a greater degree than most men what it is to live *in* Christ, and to him His presence was very real, and true and constant."

Chalmers greatly valued the prayers of others. "Thank God," he once wrote, "for bairns' prayers. Eh, lassie, wha kens when it is most needed. When in battle with the sea lately, it may be some of you were speaking then for me."

Words no less revealing are written by Canon Maynard Smith, in his "Life of Frank Weston, Bishop of Zanzibar." "He went to God about all that troubled him, and never scrupled, as a son from a father, to ask from God anything that he required. . . . A native priest, who once accompanied him on his journeys, says that when he, like the rest of the camp, went to sleep by the fire the Bishop began to pray; when he woke about three in the morning the Bishop was still praying. In the daytime he was so busy, and yet at night he had such energy in prayer. The priest says: 'Of all that he taught me and said to me, of all that I watched him do, this was the greatest wonder—to see how he prayed.'"<sup>1</sup>

Bishop Weston advised that each of his ordained helpers should devote two hours every morning to communion with God. "Prayer,"

<sup>1</sup> "Frank, Bishop of Zanzibar," by Canon Maynard Smith, pp. 79, 80.

he said, "is the only known way of bringing to our heathen people the power that is to make them Christians and bring them to heaven ; that is to say, it is the supreme secret, the possession of which differentiates us from them." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> " Frank, Bishop of Zanzibar," p. 75.

## CHAPTER XXXVI

### GREAT AMERICANS

THE exiles who sailed for America on board the "Mayflower" in 1620 undertook a hazardous voyage. "Behind them," says S. R. Gardiner, "save in a few distant Leyden garrets, there were none to whom their failure or their success would furnish more than a few hours' scornful gossip. Before them was the stormy sea, and in the Far West lay that wilderness which was only waiting for their approach to stiffen under its winter frosts. Yet there was no sign of blenching. If God were on their side, what mattered the coldness of the world, the jeers of the sailors, or the howling of the Atlantic storms?"

On the 11th November, "the 'Mayflower' rounded the extreme point of the peninsula of Cape Cod, and dropped anchor in the smooth water inside. . . . One hundred and two persons, of whom about fifty only were full-grown men, looked out under the bleak November sky upon the desolate shore on which they were, with as little loss of time as possible, to search for a home."<sup>1</sup>

"Being thus arrived in a good harbour and brought safe to land, they fell upon their knees and blessed the God of heaven who had brought

<sup>1</sup> "History of England from 1663-42," vol. iv, pp. 160, 161.

them over the vast and furious ocean, and delivered them from all the perils and miseries thereof, again to set their feet on the firm and stable earth, their native element."

Little did the New England settlers, or their predecessors who colonised Virginia, imagine what mighty destinies were reserved for the American people.

George Washington, father and founder of American Independence, was a man of sincere personal piety. "No nobler figure," says an English historian,<sup>1</sup> "ever stood in the forefront of a nation's life. Washington was grave and courteous in address; his manners were simple and unpretending; his silence and the serene calmness of his temper spoke of a perfect self-mastery; but there was little in his outer bearing to reveal the grandeur of soul which lifts his figure, with all the simple majesty of an ancient statue, out of the smaller passions, the meaner impulses of the world around him. What recommended him for command was simply his weight among his fellow landowners of Virginia, and the experience of war which he had gained by service in Braddock's luckless expedition against Fort Duquesne. It was only as the weary fight went on that the colonists learnt little by little the greatness of their leader, his clear judgment, his heroic endurance, his silence under difficulties, his calmness in the hour of danger or defeat, the patience with which he waited, the quickness

<sup>1</sup> J. R. Green, "A Short History of the English People," pp. 754, 755.

and hardness with which he struck, the lofty and serene sense of duty that never swerved from its task through resentment or jealousy, that never through war or peace felt the touch of a meaner ambition, that knew no aim save that of guarding the freedom of his fellow-countrymen, and no personal longing save that of returning to his own fireside when their freedom was secured. It was almost unconsciously that men learnt to cling to Washington with a trust and faith such as few other men have won, and to regard him with a reverence which still hushes us in presence of his memory. Even America hardly recognised his real grandeur till death set his seal on 'the man first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his fellow-countrymen.' "

There were two small Episcopalian churches where Washington and his wife worshipped in the years before the War of Independence. It was noticed that while she knelt, he was accustomed to stand at prayer. Both were communicants. We hear of the young leader conducting service for his troops in camp, but the extreme reserve of his character forbade any full expression of his religious feelings. He believed in a personal Providence, and gave thanks to the Divine Goodness. He has told how he kept vigil in anxious hours, with the sleeping camp around him, and we may well believe that his converse was with the Unseen. The soul of George Washington was not less "in tune with the Infinite" than that of Shakespeare's Henry V before Agincourt, or Richmond before Bosworth. An



American biographer tells us that he prayed with the simple faith of a child.

Among early champions of the slave no name is more highly honoured than that of the Quaker poet John Greenleaf Whittier. He wrote to a woman friend in 1837: "Thee would not judge perhaps from the tone of this letter that my mind has been a good deal exercised of late on the subject of religious obligation. Yet such is the fact. The prayer of Cowper is sometimes in my mind, 'Oh, for a closer walk with God.' I feel that there are too many things of the world between me and the realisation of a quiet communion with the pure and Holy Spirit. Why is it that we go on from day to day and week by week in this manner? Alas, for human nature in its best estate! There is no upward tendency in it. It looks downward. It is indeed of the earth."<sup>1</sup>

The burden of the crusade weighed heavily upon him. "On Fifth Day evening," he wrote in 1840, "I called to see J. J. Gurney, agreeable to his request in reference to abolition matters. After our interview was over, Richard Mott followed me to the door, and wished to accompany me to my lodgings. During our walk he told me he knew not how it was or why, but that his mind had been drawn into a deep and extraordinary exercise of sympathy with me; that he had been sensible of a deep trial and exercise in my own mind; that he had felt it so strongly that he could not rest easy without informing me of it, although he had heard nothing and seen

<sup>1</sup> S. T. Pickard, "Life and Letters of John Greenleaf Whittier," vol. i, p. 210.

nothing to produce this conviction in his mind. He felt desirous to offer me the language of encouragement, to urge me to put aside every weight that encumbers, and to look unto Him who was able to deliver from every trial. I confess I was startled. Firmly as I believed the Quaker doctrine on this subject, its personal application to myself in a manner so utterly inexplicable by merely human reasoning awed me. I said little to him, but enough to show him something of the state of my mind. Pray for me, that I may not suffer this most evident day of the Lord's visitation to pass over and leave me as before."<sup>1</sup>

Again Whittier wrote: "I cannot help believing in prayer for spiritual things. Being fully possessed of Christ, then it is He that prays. The heartiest prayer is to pray 'Thy will be done.'"

The following words occur in a letter sent in reply to an address from some fifty of the poet's friends in England (1882): "Especially I am glad, that so many dear friends, whose names recall the worthies of past generations, are able to partake with me of the great hope that He whose will it is that all should turn to Him and live, and whose tender mercy endureth forever, and is over all the works of His hands, will do the best that is possible for all His creatures. What that may be we know not, but we can trust Him to the uttermost. This hope and this trust in the mercy of the All-Merciful I have felt impelled to express, yet with a solemn recognition of the

<sup>1</sup> S. T. Pickard, "Life and Letters of John Greenleaf Whittier," vol. i, pp. 262, 263.

awful consequences of alienation from Him, and a full realisation of the truth that sin and suffering are inseparable. There is a passage in the prayer of John Woolman on his death-bed which has occurred to me, when the burden of the sin and sorrow of the world has rested heavily upon me : ' I felt the misery of my fellow-creatures, separated from the Divine Harmony, and it was greater than I could bear, and I was crushed down under it. In the depth of misery I remembered that Thou art omnipotent, and that I had called Thee Father, and I felt that I loved Thee, and I was made quiet in my will, and waited for deliverance from Thee.' Let me say that the hope which I humbly cherish for myself and my fellow-creatures rests, not upon any work or merit of my own, but upon the Infinite Love, manifested in the life and death of the Divine Master, and in the light and grace afforded to all."

Oliver Wendell Holmes has these lines in his memorial tribute to his friend Whittier :

" Not thine to lean on priesthood's broken reed ;  
No barriers caged thee in a bigot's fold ;  
Did zealots ask to syllable thy creed,  
Thou saidst ' Our Father,' and thy creed was told."

For a third example we turn to the American Civil War. Abraham Lincoln told his Cabinet that he had gone on his knees, before the battle of Antietam, and like a child had promised that if a victory were given which drove the enemy out of Maryland he would consider it his duty to move forward to the emancipation of the slaves. " It might be thought strange," he said, " that he had in this way submitted the disposal of

matters, when the way was not clear to his mind what he should do. God had decided this question in favour of the slaves." Antietam was a victory, and the Confederate forces withdrew.

"He said his prayers," writes Lord Charnwood, "said them intently; valued the fact that others prayed for him and for the nation."

Lincoln would have seen no extravagance in the lines of Christopher Smart :

"Strong is the lion—like a coal  
His eyeball,—like a bastion's mole  
His chest against the foes;  
Strong the gier-eagle on his sail,  
Strong against tide the enormous whale  
Emerges as he goes.

"But stronger still, in earth and air,  
And in the sea, the man of prayer;  
And far beneath the tide;  
And in the seat to faith assigned,  
Where ask is have, where seek is find,  
Where knock is open wide."

Of the Christian soldier and hero of the South, General Stonewall Jackson, his biographer, Colonel Henderson, has written: "Jackson's religion entered into every action of his life. No duty, however trivial, was begun without asking a blessing, or ended without returning thanks! 'He had long cultivated,' he said, 'the habit of connecting the most trivial and customary acts of life with a silent prayer.'"

"'His life at home,' says his wife, 'was perfectly regular and systematic. He rose about six o'clock and first knelt in secret prayer; then he took a cold bath, which was never omitted even in the coldest days of winter. This was



followed by a brisk walk, in rain or shine. Seven o'clock was the hour for family prayers.' "

"He prayed without ceasing, under fire as in the camp; but he never mistook his own impulse for a revelation of the Divine will. He prayed for help to do his duty, and he prayed for success, . . . but he knew that prayer is not always answered in the way that man would have it."

In his tent at night, during the Civil War, General Jackson and his staff "gathered together for their evening devotions, and the conversation ran not on the merits of horse and hound, on strategy or tactics, but on the power of faith and the mysteries of redemption." After the battle of Bull Run a brother officer said to him: "General, how is it that you can keep so cool, and appear so utterly insensible to danger in such a storm of shell and bullets as rained about you when your hand was hit?" "He instantly became grave and reverential in his manner, and answered, in a low tone of great earnestness: 'Captain, my religious belief teaches me to feel as safe in battle as in bed. God has fixed the time for my death. I do not concern myself about that, but to be always ready, no matter when it may overtake me.' He added after a pause, looking me full in the face, 'That is the way all men should live, and then all would be equally brave.' "

Stories were told in the camp of how the General had been seen walking in the woods absorbed in prayer, or lifting his left hand with that peculiar gesture which the men believed was an appeal to heaven.



Writing of May 1862, Colonel Henderson says :  
 “ The end of the rebellion seemed near at hand. Washington was full of the anticipated triumph. The crowds passed to and fro in the broad avenues, exchanging congratulations on the success of the Northern arms and the approaching downfall of the slaveholders. The theatres were filled with delighted audiences, who hailed every scoffing allusion to the ‘ Southern chivalry ’ with enthusiasm, and gaiety and confidence reigned supreme. Little dreamt the light-hearted multitude that, in the silent woods of the Luray Valley, a Confederate army lay asleep beneath the stars. Little dreamt Lincoln, or Banks, or Stanton, that not more than seventy miles from Washington, and less than thirty from Strasburg, the most daring of their enemies, waiting for the dawn to rise above the mountains, was pouring out his soul in prayer—

“ Appealing from his native sod

*In forma pauperis* to God :

‘ Lay bare Thine arm—stretch forth Thy rod,  
 Amen ! ’ That’s Stonewall’s way.”

“ His devout habits,” says Henderson elsewhere, “ were no secret in the camp. Jim, most faithful of servants, declared that he could always tell when there was going to be a battle. ‘ The general,’ he said, ‘ is a great man for prayin’. He pray night and mornin’—all times. But when I see him git up several times in the night, an’ go off an’ pray, *den I know there is goin’ to be somethin’ to pay*, an’ I go right away and pack his haversack ! ’ ”

Stonewall Jackson “ made no secret of his

absolute dependence on a higher Power. Every action was a prayer, for every action was begun and ended in the name of the Almighty. Consciously and unconsciously, in deed as in word, in the quiet of his home and in the tumult of battle, he fastened to his soul those golden chains 'that bind the whole round earth about the feet of God.' Nor was their burden heavy. 'He was the happiest man,' says one of his friends, 'I ever knew,' and he was wont to express his surprise that others were less happy than himself."<sup>1</sup>

When the Christian hero lay wounded and dying in May 1863 at Guiney's Station, he asked, "Who is preaching at headquarters to-day?" "He was told that Mr. Lacy was, and that the whole army was praying for him. 'Thank God,' he said, 'they are very kind to me.' Already his strength was fast ebbing, and although his face brightened when his baby was brought to him, his mind had begun to wander. Now he was on the battlefield, giving orders to his men; now at home in Lexington; now at prayers in the camp. Occasionally his senses came back to him, and about half-past one he was told that he had but two hours to live. Again he answered, feebly, but firmly, 'Very good, it is all right.' These were almost his last coherent words. For some time he lay unconscious, and then suddenly he cried out: 'Order A. P. Hill to prepare for action! Pass the infantry to the front! Tell Major Hawks'—then stopped, leaving the sen-

<sup>1</sup> "Stonewall Jackson and the American Civil War," by G. F. R. Henderson, vol. ii, p. 610.

tence unfinished. Once more he was silent; but a little while after he said very quietly and clearly, 'Let us cross over the river, and rest under the shade of the trees,' and the soul of the great captain passed into the peace of God."<sup>1</sup>

We may add this testimony of one of the chief American historians, James Ford Rhodes, to the character of "Stonewall" Jackson: "No man was more devout. With an unquestioning faith in a God who directed by continual interposition human affairs, his religion became a part of his being, influencing every act. When misfortune and sorrow came, his comfort lay in the reflection, 'We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.' His communion with his Maker seemed complete. He prayed without ceasing, supplicating the throne of grace for the most common things, and asking Divine guidance in the most trivial affairs of life. He said that the habit of prayer had become with him almost as fixed as the habit of breathing."<sup>2</sup>

Of Robert E. Lee, another captain of the South, the same historian writes, "It may truly be said he walked with God."

We may quote also the testimony of Thomas Nelson Page: "It has been customary to think of piety as the peculiar attribute of Jackson, the Puritan in type, rather than of Lee, the Cavalier. But, if possible, Lee was even more pious than his great Lieutenant. In fact, both were men who in the early prime of their manhood conse-

<sup>1</sup> "Stonewall Jackson and the American Civil War," vol. ii, p. 580.

<sup>2</sup> "History of the United States," vol. iii, pp. 460, 461.

crated themselves to God, and thenceforth served Him with a single heart. It shines forth in every page they ever penned. It was the basis of their character; it formed the foundation of that wonderful poise which, amid the most difficult and arduous situations, left them the supreme tranquillity which was the field in which their powers found exercise. No one can familiarise himself with Lee's life without seeing that he was a man consecrated to the work of his Divine Master, and amid all conditions possessed a mind stayed on Him."

The last conscious gesture of General Lee was to ask God's blessing at his board. Utterance failed him, he sank back in his chair, and died after a very short illness.

Richard Keen's hymn, "How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord," was sung at the warrior's funeral.

Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," one of the most famous books of the nineteenth century, wrote for her children in 1868 a letter giving her mature views on Spiritualism. "The very instinct of a sacred sorrow," she told them, "seems to forbid that our beautiful, our glorified ones should stoop lower than even to the medium of their cast-off bodies, to juggle, and rap, and squeak, and perform mountebank tricks with tables and chairs; to recite over in weary sameness harmless truisms, which we were wise enough to say for ourselves; to trifle, and banter and jest, or to lead us through endless moonshining mazes. Sadly and soberly we say that, if this be communion with the dead,



we had rather be without it. We want something a little in advance of our present life, and not below it. We have read with some attention weary pages of spiritual communication purporting to come from Bacon, Swedenborg, and others, and long accounts from divers spirits of things seen in the spirit land, and we can conceive of no more appalling prospect than to have them true.

“If the future life is so weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable as we might infer from these readings, one would have reason to deplore an immortality from which no suicide could give an outlet. To be condemned to such eternal prosing would be worse than annihilation.

“Is there, then, no satisfaction for the craving of the soul? There is One who says: ‘I am He that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of hell and of death’; and this same Being said once before: ‘He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him.’ This is a promise direct and personal; not confined to the first Apostles, but stated in the most general way as attainable by anyone who loves and does the will of Jesus. It seems given to us as some comfort for the unavoidable heart-breaking separations of death that there should be, in that dread unknown, one all-powerful Friend with whom it is possible to commune, and from whose spirit there may come a response to us. Our Elder Brother, the partaker of our nature, is not only in the spirit-land, but is all-powerful there. X It is He that shutteth and no



man openeth, and openeth and no man shutteth. He whom we have seen in the flesh, weeping over the grave of Lazarus, is He who hath the keys of hell and of death. If we cannot commune with our friends, we can at least commune with Him to whom they are present, who is intimately with them as with us. He is the true bond of union between the spirit-world and our souls; and one blest hour of prayer, when we draw near to Him and feel the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of that love of His that passeth knowledge, is better than those incoherent, vain, dreamy glimpses with which longing hearts are cheated.

“They who have disbelieved all spiritual truth, who have been Sadduceeic doubters of either angel or spirit, may find in modern spiritualism a great advance. But can one who has ever really had communion with Christ, who has said with John, ‘Truly our fellowship is with the Father and the Son’—can such an one be satisfied with what is found in the modern circle?

“Let us, then, who long for communion with spirits, seek nearness to Him who has promised to speak and commune, leaving for ever this word to His Church: ‘I will not leave you comfortless. I will come to you.’”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Life and Letters of Harriet Beecher Stowe,” edited by Annie Fields, pp. 309, 310.

## CHAPTER XXXVII

### VOICES FROM RUSSIA

THE Russian Orthodox Church, now persecuted and brought low among the families of Christendom, had this note of apostolic authority from the beginning, that she taught her children to pray. The sacred picture in the corner of the poorest room, with the light burning before it, was a perpetual reminder that man does not live by bread alone. The duties of prayer and fasting were inculcated on every believer. There is hardly one of Russia's great modern writers whose work is entirely uninfluenced by religion.

Turgenev departed, at least outwardly, from the faith of his ancestors, but his latest biographer has printed two prayers which were recently found among the papers of one of his friends. They are written on a yellowed sheet which has these words pencilled on the margin : "Turgenev in his youth, Wanted to tear up." The first, entitled "A Prayer in Time of Suffering," runs thus : "My gracious Lord and God, permit me to throw myself at Thy feet with a humble prayer. God grant me relief from my suffering, hold out to me the hand of help, hear my bitter groaning, look charitably upon my tears. My God, my God, do not remember the sins of my youth ; do not let me fall into despair,

comfort my downcast and hopeless spirit. Lord, help me, spare me. O my God! spare me, the poor, the ailing one; hear my weeping; Lord, let me draw my breath."

The second, apparently written after the danger was over, is called, "A Prayer in Time of Relief." "Gracious Lord, I thank Thee from the depths of my heart for the relief from my illness. Let the quiet joy of the appeased heart be my prayer before Thee. Lord, favour me with Thy continued aid; let it always dwell in my memory, so that I may not sink into obliviousness and indifference, but that I may always remember Thy grace. Lord, I thank Thee."<sup>1</sup>

Leo Tolstoy dwells on the careless materialism which prevailed in his youth among the Russian landed proprietors. "I remember," he says, "that when my elder brother Dmitry, who was then at the university, suddenly, in the passionate way natural to him, devoted himself to religion and began to attend all the Church services, to fast and to lead a pure and moral life, we all—even our elders—unceasingly called him, for some unknown reason, 'Noah.'"<sup>2</sup>

There were evil influences at work on young minds. "A clever and truthful man," writes Tolstoy, "once told me the story of how he ceased to believe. When he was already twenty-six, he once, on a hunting expedition, at the place where they put up for the night, by habit retained since childhood, knelt down in the evening to pray. His elder brother, who was at the hunt

<sup>1</sup> "Turgenev," by Avrahm Yarmolinsky, pp. 65, 66.

<sup>2</sup> "A Confession" (World's Classics Edition), p. 3.

with him, was lying on some hay and watching him. When S. had finished and was settling down for the night, his brother said to him: 'So you still do that?' They said nothing more to one another. But from that day S. ceased to say his prayers or to go to church. And now he has not prayed, received Communion, or gone to church for thirty years. And this not because he knows his brother's convictions and has joined him in them, nor because he has decided anything in his own soul, but simply because the word spoken by his brother was like the push of a finger on a wall that was ready to fall by its own weight."

But if the brother had said, "Shall we pray together?"

Father Zossima, in Dostoievsky's novel, "The Brothers Karamazov," bids young men to be not forgetful of prayer. "Every time you pray, if your prayer is sincere, there will be new feeling and new meaning in it, which will give you fresh courage, and you will understand that prayer is an education. Remember, too, every day, and whenever you can, repeat to yourself, 'Lord, have mercy on all who appear before Thee this day.' For every hour and every moment thousands of men leave life on this earth, and their souls appear before God. And how many of them depart in solitude, unknown, sad, dejected, that no one mourns for them or even knows whether they have lived or not. And behold, from the other end of the earth perhaps, your prayer for their rest will rise up to God though you knew them not nor they you."

Alyosha Karamazov, whom his creator calls "the young hero I love so much," is compelled, during the time of his novitiate, to pass through experiences that must have been terrifying to his pure heart. Association with his wicked father alone led him to sound "the depths of Satan." Yet at the close of a long and agitating day he returns unscathed to his monastery, and with youth's resiliency, he makes ready for a tranquil night. "'God have mercy upon all of them, have all these unhappy and turbulent souls in Thy keeping, and set them in the right path. All ways are Thine. Save them according to Thy wisdom. Thou art love. Thou wilt send joy to all!'" Alyosha murmured, crossing himself and falling into peaceful sleep."

The great Khomiakov, leader of the Slavophil movement, in the reign of Nicholas I, worked for the emancipation of the serfs, and for the liberation of the State from foreign influences. He believed that the Orthodox Church possessed within herself the capacity for a spiritual revival, nay more, in that she would one day gather the nations under her wings. His theological and political writings were published abroad, since the censorship forbade them to be printed or even read in Russia. Khomiakov dwelt much on the duty of private prayer, and on the benefits to be gained by mutual intercession. Like Wesley, he believed that no one can be saved by himself. "We know that if one of us falls he falls alone; but no one is saved alone; the saved man is saved in the Church, as its member, in union with the other members. If a man believes he enters the



communion of faith. Does he love?—he is one with the whole society of the loving. Does he pray?—he enters the fellowship of prayer. . . . Say not, What help can I bring to the living or the dead by prayer since my petition suffices not for myself alone? As thou understandest not how to pray, what purpose would be served by that pleading for thyself? But within thee prays the Spirit of love. . . . Neither say thou, Wherefore should another need my prayer, if he prays for himself and Christ intercedes for him? When thou prayest, the Spirit of love prays within thee. Say not: The judgment of God cannot be altered—for thy prayer itself has its place in the ways of God and He foreknew it from the beginning. If thou art a member of the Church thy prayer is offered up for all the members. But if the hand says that it needs not the blood of the rest of the body and that it refuses its own blood to the body, the hand becomes withered. Thou art necessary to the Church, so long as thou remainest within her; but if thou partest from the common life, thine own must decay and thou art no longer a member. . . . The life blood of the Church is prayer for one another, and its breath is praise of the Lord.”<sup>1</sup>

“The mystic life of the Church,” according to this devout son of Orthodox Russia, “finds its true expression not merely in syllogisms expressed in words or mentally conceived, but in contemplation and in the contrite heart, and in sincere humility, and in knees that are bowed in prayer;

<sup>1</sup> Translated from an article by Nikolaus von Arseniev in “Die Christliche Welt,” of December 1926.

and in the invincible assurance that God will not refuse the truth to the Church which was redeemed by the blood of His Son. Beyond all this, that life consists in love towards one another in Christ Jesus, Who alone bestows upon His people strength and wisdom and the word of life."

The Spirit of God breathes where He will throughout the Church, and all its outward things are sanctified as His messages and means of expression. "For the Scripture in itself is outward and tradition outward and works are outward—the inward thing in them is the Spirit of God alone."

The following prayer was appointed in the Russian Church to be used by private individuals before receiving the Holy Communion: "Accept me this day, O Son of God, as a partaker of Thy mystic Supper; for I will not reveal Thy mystery to Thine enemies, nor give Thee a kiss, as did Judas; but like the thief I will confess Thee; remember me, O Lord, in Thy Kingdom."<sup>1</sup>

Mr. W. J. Birkbeck, that Oxford scholar of Quaker ancestry who knew Russia and the Russian Church better than any Englishman of his day, attended many festivals at Moscow. "When I came out of the Cathedral at midnight," he wrote to Sir Walter Parratt in 1890, "the Kremlin was a sight never to be forgotten. The whole court crowded with people, and all the gold domes of the cathedrals, about thirty

<sup>1</sup> "Birkbeck and the Russian Church," edited by Athelstan Riley, p. 136.

in number altogether, lit up by the moon, and the great belfry with torches, while the 1,600 bells of Moscow were all ringing as hard as they could! I heard 'Ivan Veliki' (Great John) for the first time. He is only rung five days in the year, but he is worth going the whole way to Moscow to hear. He weighs a little over 107 tons, and I never heard such a note in all my life, so deep and mellow and soft, and yet so strong and irresistible! They rang him for half an hour by himself, before Vespers, and when he stopped, the whole town for five minutes afterwards seemed bathed in the note of some deep organ pipe."

Twenty-six years later (in June 1916) Mr. Birkbeck lay dying in his Norfolk home. His widow tells us that in his last hours "he repeated over and over again 'Ivan Veliki, Ivan Veliki,' showing that he was back in thought at the 'Uspensky Sobor,'<sup>1</sup> where he had so often prayed, and thus he drew near and passed to the fuller and more wonderful worship of the Christ who prayed that *all should be one.*"<sup>2</sup>

"I dimly guess what Time in mists confounds;  
Yet ever and anon a trumpet sounds  
From the hid battlements of Eternity;  
Those shaken mists a space unsettle, then  
Round the half-glimpst turrets slowly wash again."<sup>3</sup>

The bells of Moscow, clear and triumphant as in Tchaikovsky's "Overture 1812,"—shall not the world hear them again, when the Russian

<sup>1</sup> Cathedral of the Assumption in the Kremlin, Moscow.

<sup>2</sup> "Life and Letters of W. J. Birkbeck," pp. 41, 306.

<sup>3</sup> Francis Thompson.

Church, purified and ennobled by suffering, fulfils the dreams of her saints ? “ The Lord will not forsake His people for His great name’s sake, because it hath pleased the Lord to make you His people.”





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